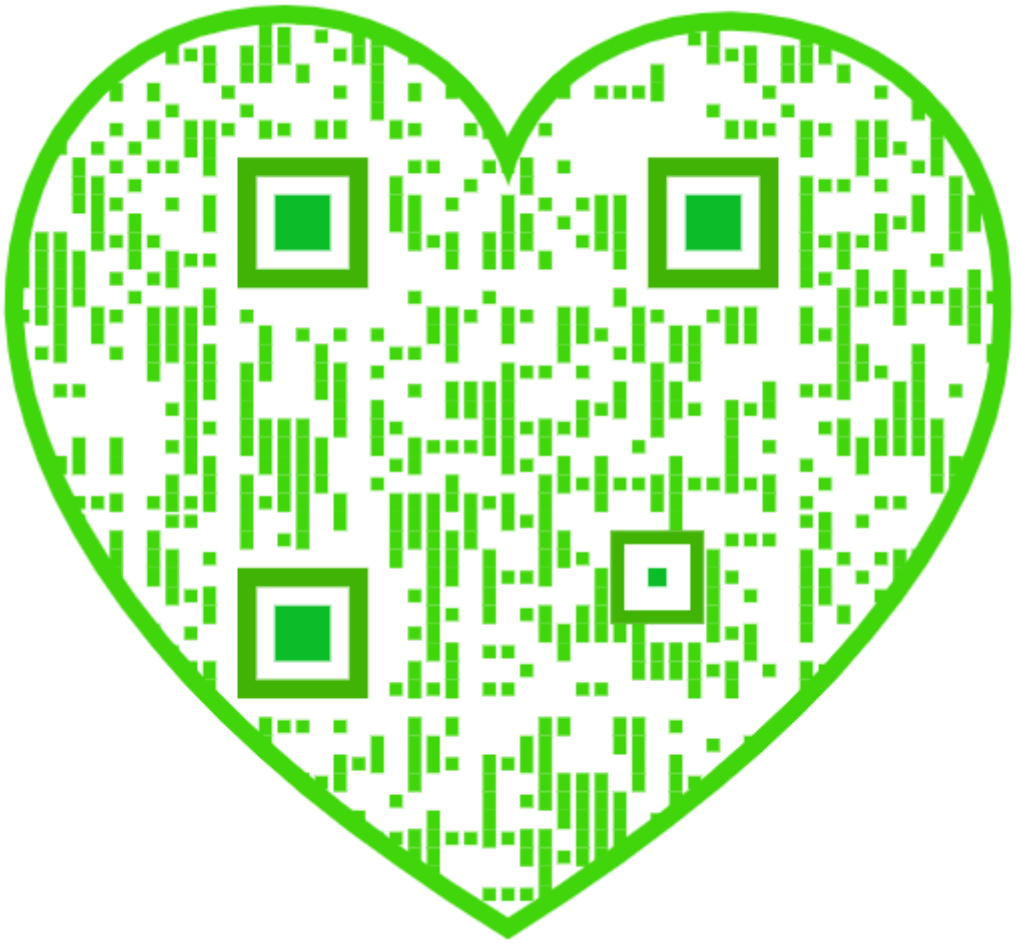
THE DECORATION AND FURNITURE OF ENGLISH MANSIONS DURING THE XVII. & XVIII. CENTURIES

BY FRANCIS LENYGON



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THE DECORATION AND FURNITURE OF ENGLISH MANSIONS DURING THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES. BY FRANCIS LENYGON

FIRST STATE ROOM AT 31 OLD BURLINGTON STREET

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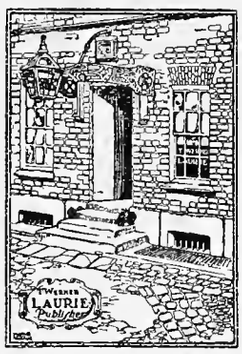

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INTRODUCTORY

MUCH progress has been made of late years not only in the study of the arts of the Renaissance in England but in their application to modern conditions of life, and the improvement in architecture, furniture and decoration during the last ten years is, to a great extent, owing to the better knowledge of the styles which prevailed during the best periods. Different branches of the subject have been dealt with by various writers, yet certain aspects seem to have been overlooked, and the accompanying treatise may prove of service since it aims at embracing the treatment of walls, of ceilings, of floors and of furniture—in short, the development of the whole scheme of interior decoration in England during the seventeenth and especially during the earlier part of the eighteenth century.

Few English houses built during those times retain interiors which—owing to alterations to suit requirements or fancies of successive generations—have not lost many of the characteristics of their period. An author is therefore face to face with the problem of obtaining an unbroken series of examples representative of the wide range which the subject embraces.

The difficulty has been overcome in the present instance by the kindness of the firm with whom the author is associated, who granted permission to photograph any articles in their collection at N° 31 Old Burlington Street; and with few exceptions this source has proved sufficient to provide all the illustrations which this book contains.

As the house where this collection is exhibited is itself of considerable interest, some particulars of its past associations and surroundings are given before commencing to deal with the main subject to which this work is devoted. The site was originally part of a ten-acre field at the back of the gardens of Burlington House. In the earliest records it is referred to as Nowell Street, but no doubt "Noel" was intended, the family name of the wife of the second Earl of Burlington; but in 1736, when the street was nearly rebuilt, the name was changed as a compliment to Richard, the third Earl (born 1694, died 1753), the distinguished architect and patron of artists, then living at Burlington House. Cork Street was also named after his second title, and Savile Row after the Lady Dorothy Savile whom he had married. Most of its houses have at different periods been altered or rebuilt, but some of the faded grandeur of the Georgian days still seems to linger in the immediate locality.

During

Introductory

During the whole of the eighteenth century Old Burlington Street was the home of famous statesmen, soldiers and public characters, men and women who helped to make the history of their day. On the site now occupied by the branch Bank of England formerly stood the mansion which Leoni designed for the third Duke of Queensberry, in which the poet Gay occupied an apartment. Colonel Wolfe, father of the famous General, lived at N° 10. N° 29 was designed in 1723 by Lord Burlington for Field-Marshal George Wade, to whose memory a tablet exists in Westminster Abbey, and later in the century the same house was the home of the Marquis of Cornwallis, Governor-General of India.

There were few more prominent men in the reign of the first two Georges than Henry Pelham, the first occupant of N° 32. A constant supporter of the Whig party under Walpole, he successively occupied the positions of Secretary for War, Paymaster of the Forces, First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer. He was also celebrated as a patron of the arts; both he and his brother (who became the first Duke of Newcastle) shared with Lord Burlington in the patronage of William Kent, whom he employed extensively at Esher, as well as at the new town house, to which he afterwards moved, in Arlington Street.

The widow of Edward Rich, sixth Earl of Warwick and third Earl of Holland, married the poet Addison. Her son came of age in 1721, and soon after she, again a widow, left Holland House, Kensington, and came to reside at N° 33 Old Burlington Street, then just erected.

Perhaps no house in London, dating from the eighteenth century, remains to-day so unaltered as N° 30. This Mansion was built by Sir Michael Newton, K.B., in the year of his marriage (1730) with Margaret, Countess of Coningsby in her own right. A Lincolnshire squire of great wealth and related to the Cokes of Holkham, he represented Beverley and Grantham in three Parliaments. As was so often the case during the period in which he lived, Sir Michael devoted a great part of his time to the study of classic art; he also was one of the numerous patrons of William Kent, who worked for him both here and at Culverthorpe, one of his country seats: this mansion is now part of the premises occupied by the Burlington Hotel.

It is the adjoining house (N° 31) which contains the examples of English art which are illustrated in this book; certainly no building in the street possesses a more interesting record. It was erected in 1720 by that Statesman, wit and leader of fashion and taste, John, Lord Hervey, known in literary circles as

"The Boswell

"The Boswell of George II and Queen Caroline." He was originally intended for the army, but natural inclination caused him to devote himself to literature. In his early days he was a frequenter of the opposition Court of George II and Queen Caroline, then Prince and Princess of Wales, where he fell in love with one of the Maids of Honour, the beautiful Molly Lepell, whom he married. Entering Parliament as Member for Bath in 1725, he at once made a figure in the House of Commons and was bid for by both Walpole and Pulteney; the former won, and Hervey was rewarded by the appointment of Vice-Chamberlain to the King and, in 1730, by elevation to the Peerage (his father being still alive) as Lord Hervey, and by the bestowal of the Privy Seal in 1740. His services to Walpole were considerable, and he fell when that great minister received his dismissal.

Read's *Weekly Journal* of October 1, 1730, relates, "Stephen Fox, Esq., son of the late Sir Stephen Fox, has purchased the Lord Hervey's fine house in Burlington Street; his lordship intending in a few days to remove from thence to his apartment in St James's." Lord Hervey and Stephen Fox had long been friends; together they had studied art and travelled in Italy, and in later life always remained most closely associated in politics.

But before mentioning the events in the life of the new purchaser of N° 31, the still more brilliant career of his father may be of interest. Although of comparatively humble origin, in early life he became the friend of Charles I. He was Chief of the Ordnance Board during the campaign which ended with the Battle of Worcester, and aided the Prince to escape to France; he managed his household whilst in Holland, and on the Restoration received many honours, including knighthood in 1665. It was to him, and not (as is popularly supposed) to Nell Gwynne, that the foundation of Chelsea Hospital is due.

Throughout the reigns of Charles II, James II, William and Mary, and Anne, Sir Stephen enjoyed the highest positions at Court, and won universal respect and admiration as a wise and prudent statesman. Pepys always refers to him with much respect and sums up his establishment as "a family governed so nobly and neatly as did me good to see it."

His places at Court must have brought him large profits, as, in 1680, his friend Evelyn (the diarist) computed him to be worth at least £200,000, "honestly got and unenvied, which is next to a miracle." As his only son was still a childless husband, in 1703 Sir Stephen, then in his 77th year, "unwilling that so plentiful an estate should go out of the name, and being of a hale constitution," married again, and it was the elder son of this second marriage

who purchased

who purchased as a town residence the house which now contains the examples of English Art here illustrated. In 1736 he was created a Baronet, and on his marriage with the heiress of the Strangways added that name to his own and was created Baron Strangways, Lord Stavordale and eventually Earl of Ilchester.

Sir Stephen's younger son, Henry, who had purchased Holland House, Kensington, was created Baron Holland, which title eventually became extinct, so that Holland House reverted to the senior branch.

With the exception of the top story (to which slight additions have been made during the last twenty-five years) N° 31 Old Burlington Street remains unaltered: a most interesting and typical example of a great nobleman's town house of the early Georgian, or what may be termed the English Palladian, period.

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THE DECORATION AND FURNITURE OF ENGLISH MANSIONS DURING THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES. BY FRANCIS LENYGON

CHAPTER I
THE EARLY ENGLISH RENAISSANCE

THE effect of the Italian Renaissance was beginning to be felt in this country when the disowning of Papal authority by Henry VIII (known as the Reformation) caused England, except during the brief reign of Queen Mary, to be practically cut off from all intercourse with Italy for the greater part of a century. The erection of ecclesiastical edifices, which in previous centuries had found occupation for a large proportion of the population, also suddenly ceased, and, by the latter part of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, craftsmen versed in the old Gothic arts hardly existed and even the traditions of the building industry of that period were almost forgotten.

During Elizabeth's long reign the country gradually became more settled and prosperous; the dissolution of the monasteries caused wealth to circulate in many new channels; with the downfall of the Hanseatic League the wool and cloth trades suddenly developed, and the discovery of new Continents stimulated maritime enterprise and brought riches to the merchant adventurers, so that England seemed ripe for a new style of architecture to fulfil the altered requirements. The Netherlands was then the recognized centre of art in Northern Europe; her traders travelled everywhere and were well acquainted with the developments of the Renaissance movement in Florence, Rome, Genoa and Venice. The Flemings, however, possessed the tradition of past glories in Gothic art under their Burgundian rulers, and they could not, or would not (like their French neighbours), accept forthwith the new classic forms to the entire exclusion of their former taste. The result was the intermingling of the two styles, as may be seen to-day in the Town Halls of the old cities of Belgium. With the persecutions of Philip II, many thousands of their best citizens sought refuge in this country and, in addition to establishing numerous trades, taught us their architecture.

Records show how much our great nobles were indebted to these Flemings for assistance in the erection of such palaces as Burleigh, Hatfield and Longleat; but the merchants and traders, then becoming rich and important, whilst accepting the semi-classic art of the Netherlands as their authority, had to rely more upon local conditions and talent. Prosperity had given an impetus to building and, by the accession of James I, practically a new architecture was established, a style which has been aptly termed the "Early English Renaissance."

From

Early English Renaissance

From whatever sources or influences this new style was derived, and whether the carving and ornament were due to Flemish or to English craftsmen, it is certain that nothing we possess is more characteristic of this country than the houses (and especially the small manor-houses) erected during this period.

The accompanying views illustrate a room typical of the principal apartment or living room of an English house built during the latter part of the reign of Elizabeth or under the early Stuart Kings. Of the various coats-of-arms which ornament the chimney-piece in the room, the centre one was borne by King James I, and those on either side by the Chartered Companies of Merchant Adventurers and Spanish Traders respectively, illustrating the loyalty and occupation of the owner. These characteristic carvings and the elaborate surrounding ornamentation show the importance always attached to the decoration of the English fireside. Examples of chimney-pieces so ornate as the one referred to are naturally somewhat rare; another specimen also carved in oak is therefore given on page 5, as typical of less important work at about the same date.

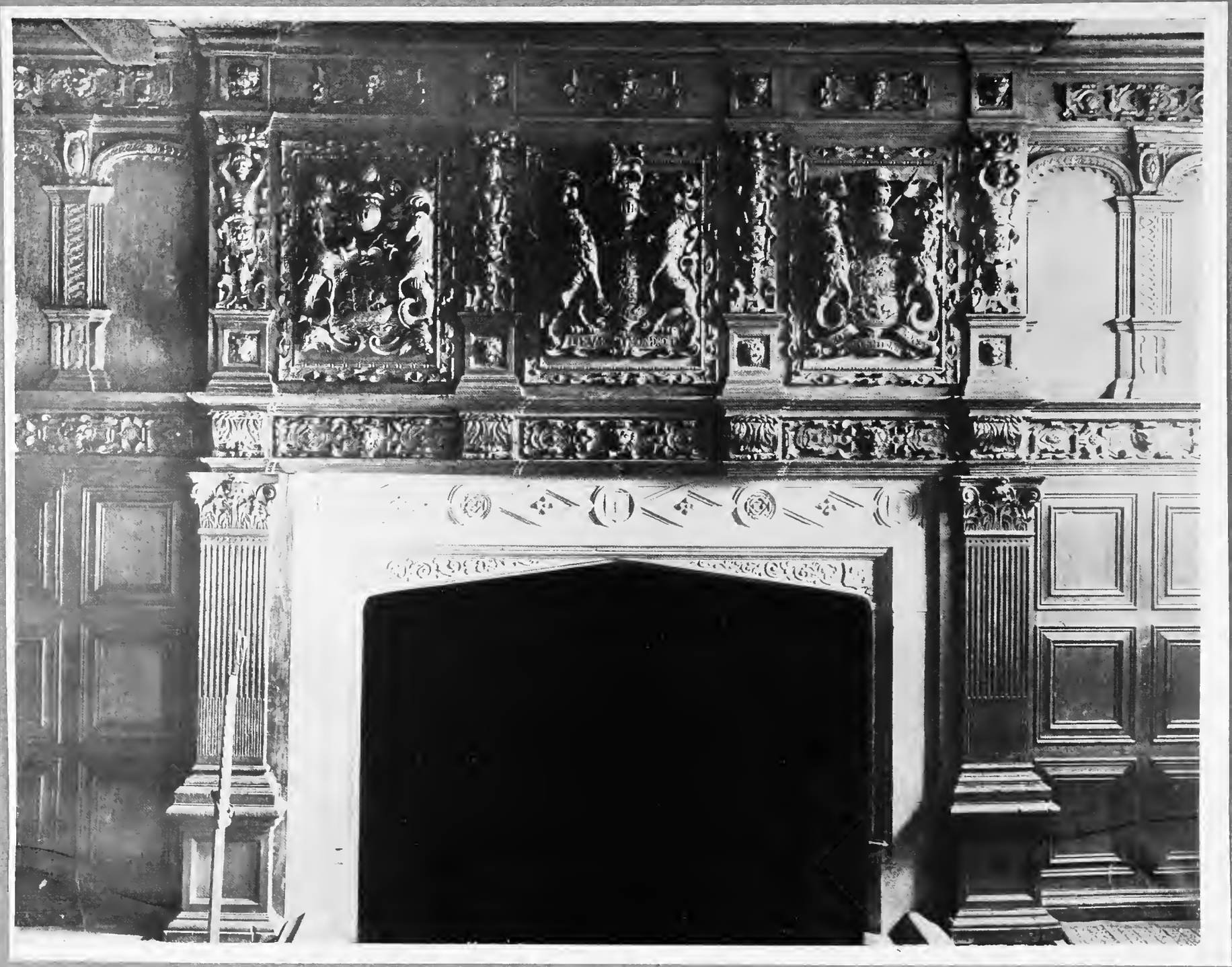
Chimney-pieces at this period were as frequently made in stone as in wood, the carving in both cases being equally elaborate. Probably the original intention was always to paint and gild such stonework, although no doubt in many cases, owing to troublous times or lack of means, this work was omitted; but so many traces of old gilding and painting are found that, considering the early Renaissance love of bright colours, it would seem probable such was the case; this applies not only to the chimney-pieces but also to plaster ceilings and friezes, as well as oak panelling, chests and other furniture of the period. The fact of such colouring being usually executed in distemper would account in a great measure for its subsequent disappearance.

Occasionally in districts where chalk is found, early Jacobean chimney-pieces are met with carved out of this most suitable material. The one here illustrated still exists in an old manor-house in Wiltshire; another well-known example is at Stockton, the detail of ornament on both being so similar that possibly they were carved by the same craftsman.

The variety of the patterns of oak panelling, with which the principal rooms were wainscoted, is remarkable. The designs display considerable originality and illustrate the various influences which then affected English art. The subject of wood panelling, however, is dealt with in a separate chapter.

The sixteenth century Flemish tapestry which occupies the whole of one

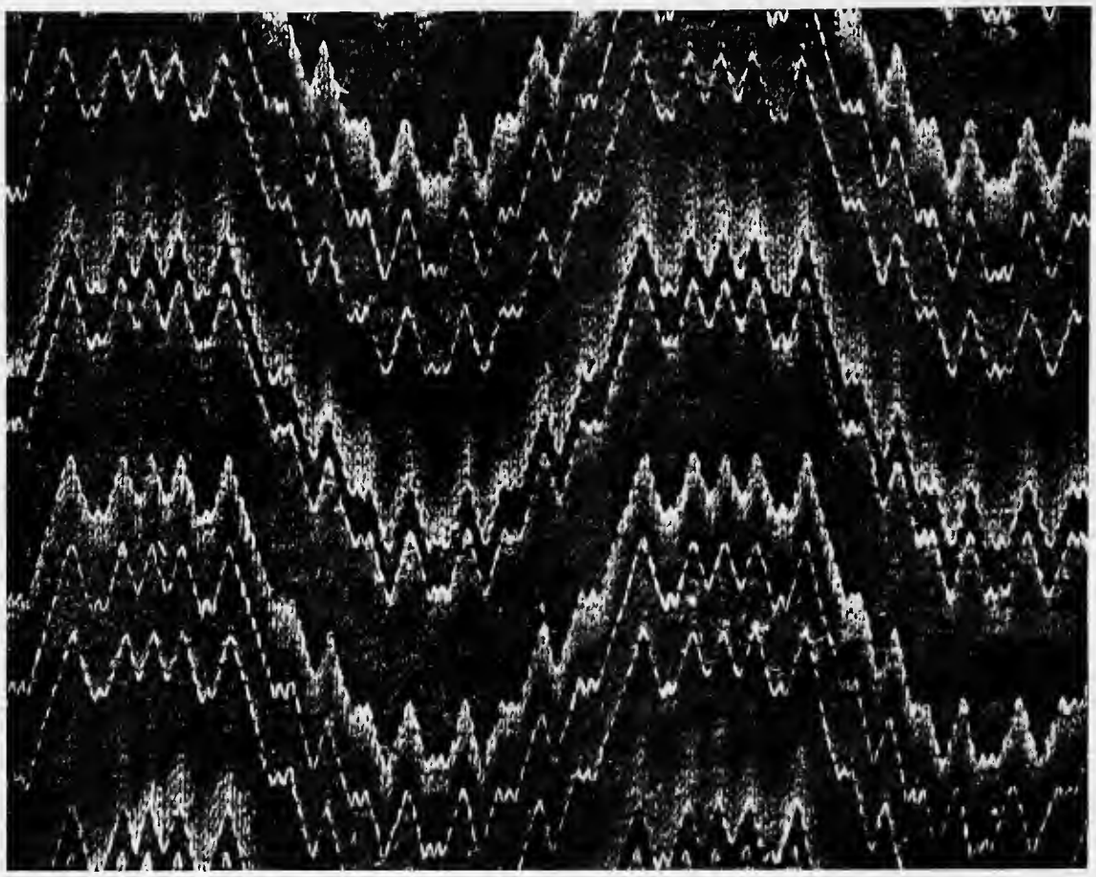
wall

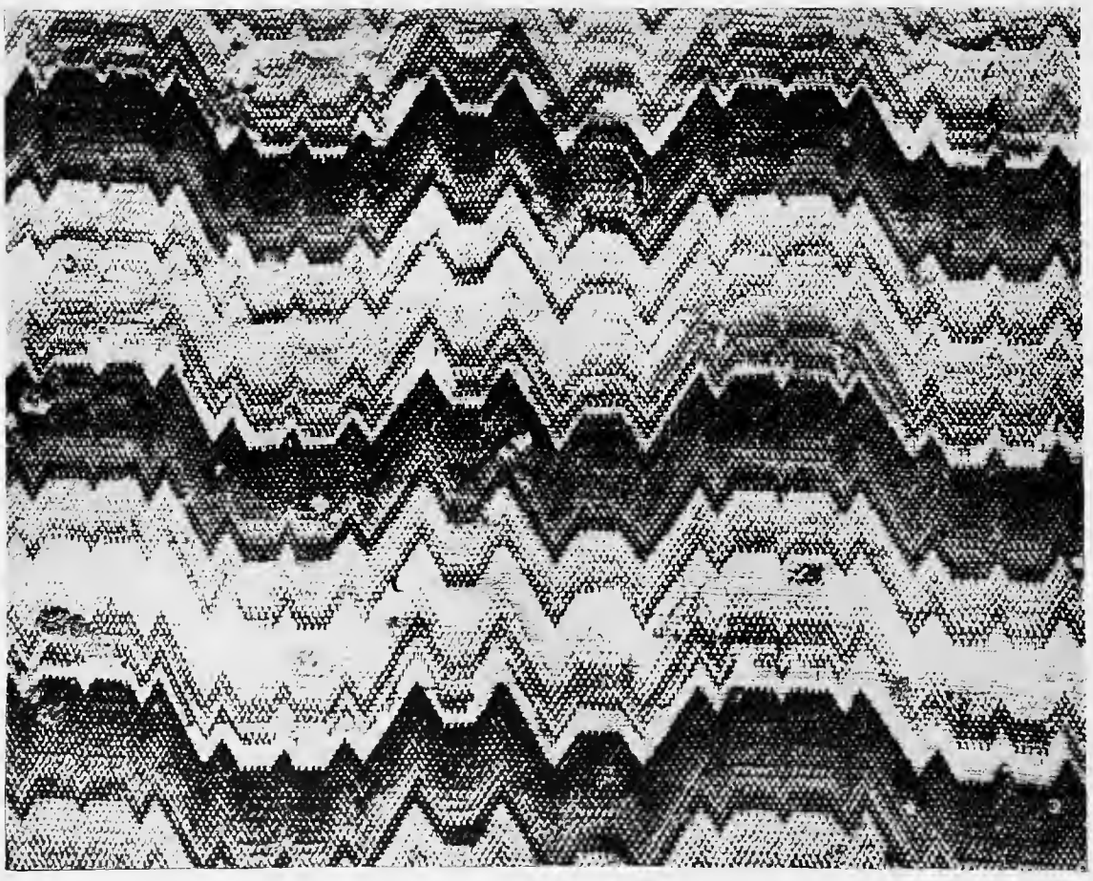


FIREPLACE IN EARLY RENAISSANCE ROOM

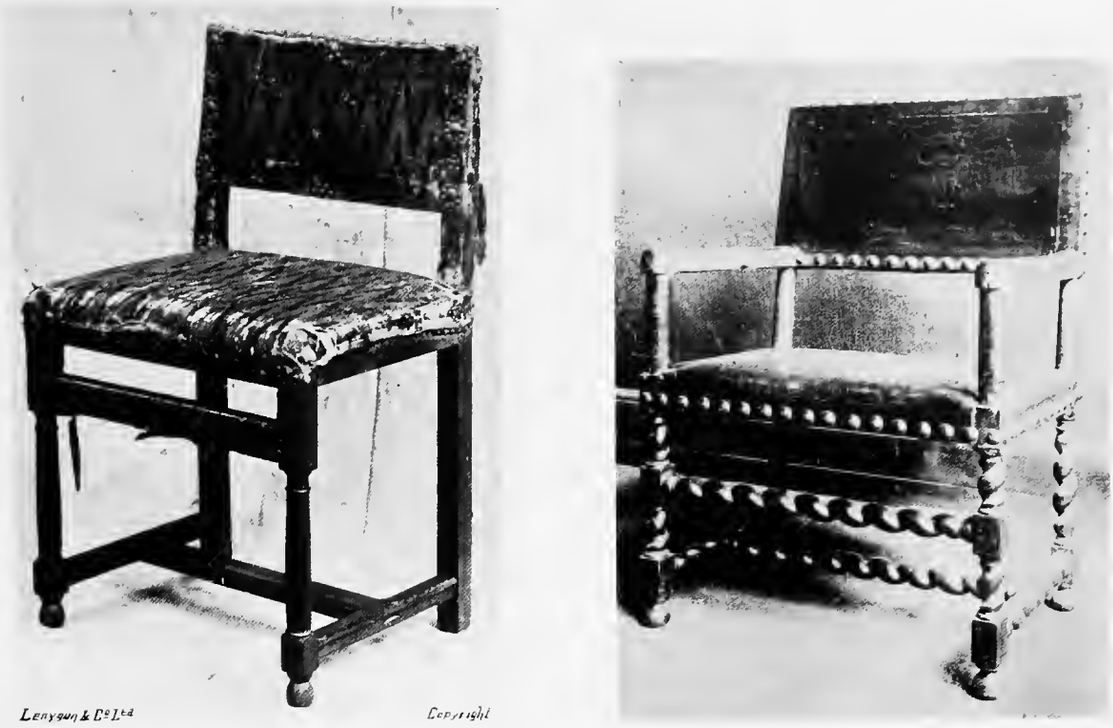
CHIMNEY-PIECE (CARVED IN CHALK) CIRCA 1600

CHIMNEY-PIECE (CARVED IN OAK) CIRCA 1600

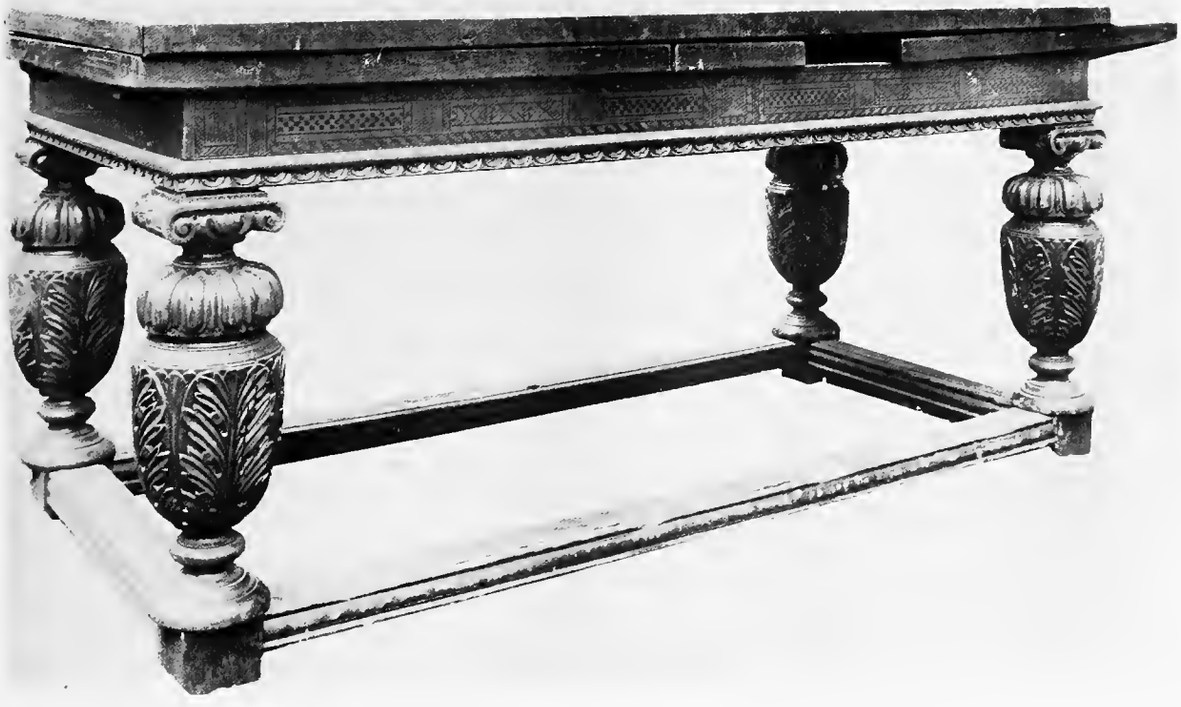




EXAMPLES OF NEEDLEWORK HANGINGS



CHAIRS, FIRST HALF OF SEVENTEENTH CENTURY



OAK TABLE WITH DRAW-OUT TOP

THE EARLY ENGLISH RENAISSANCE ROOM

wall of the room referred to represents the sacrifice of Iphigenia, daughter of Agamemnon. The possession of such a tapestry would be a sign of the wealth and position of the lord of the manor, and it would be specifically bequeathed by him in his will. A separate illustration of this is given in another chapter dealing with the whole subject of tapestries.

The wall opposite the window in this apartment is hung with bright-coloured hand-made needlework (see page 6). The importance of this particular form of material during the early Stuart period is seldom realized; it was often employed for wall hangings, and served equally for bed curtains and coverings of chairs and couches. Pictorial tapestries were never a successful English industry (even at the Mortlake factory Flemish weavers were always employed), but this eminently effective needlework had the merit of being produced in this country. It is believed to have originated in the Netherlands, certainly it somewhat resembles the painting (said to imitate hangings) with which buildings in northern Europe were often ornamented. Another variety of the same material was manufactured in Italy, principally at Perugia.

The windows on the other side of the room are fitted with "sash frames," which were introduced towards the end of the reign of James I. As in all earlier examples, the panes are small and the oak bars heavy, probably because the cost of glass was then an important item. The floor is covered with rush-matting, made by hand in the old method.

The corner screen, an interesting survival of the house planning of the Tudor period, whenever employed, formed an important decorative feature, and the example in this apartment, like the chimney-piece, is richly carved and decorated with various coats-of-arms.

No feature is more peculiarly English than the Early Renaissance plaster ceilings; they show the survival of native traditions, which, though affected to some extent by Italian influences, always retain their own individuality; indeed, in no other country can the same development of design of ceilings be traced; but these, together with the elaborate friezes characteristic of this period, are dealt with separately under the heading of "Plaster Ornamentation."

The Italian influence during the reign of Henry VII, and the earlier part of that of his successor, was more widespread in this country than is generally supposed; witness the numerous wood carvings which still exist bearing traces of classic influence. This resulted from two separate sources: firstly, the desire of those rulers to imitate the fashions which contemporary monarchs were

bringing

Early English Renaissance

bringing from Italy to their own courts, but far more owing to the increasing intercourse between the representatives of the Church in England and their superiors in Rome. Gothic art had, however, become deeply rooted in this country, and the intermingling of the two clearly marks the work of the period, and in nothing more distinctly than in the carvings with which the choir stalls, coffers, chests and other woodwork were ornamented.

During the troublous times which followed the quarrels with Rome, the style of the previous generation would seem to have almost disappeared and the arrival of the Flemings marks a distinct change, not only in architecture, but in the carved ornamentation of chests, chairs, beds, and such other articles of furniture as then existed. In addition they introduced, or at all events extended the use of, other pieces such as buffets, draw tables and cupboards in imitation of those which for a previous century had existed in their own country. Naturally, owing to altered requirements, features distinctive to this country soon began to appear, and by the accession of Charles I, notwithstanding the continued arrival of the *émigrés*, English furniture possessed considerable individuality. On page 7 are illustrated a few examples such as were in use during his reign; in each case these are of oak, in fact this wood was almost universally employed. Previous to the Restoration, extremely little furniture was considered necessary even for the greatest houses, chairs were limited in number, stools, benches, and chests providing the necessary further seating accommodation.

The comparatively few specimens we possess (such as some chairs at Knole and the bed at Berkeley Castle) of upholstered or what may be termed luxurious furniture known to have existed in this country at the beginning of the seventeenth century are, although often described as English, undoubtedly of foreign origin. If English craftsmen had been capable of doing such work, more traces would have remained of their handicraft, whereas the actual specimens are few and vary considerably from each other. However, England at that period equalled any other country in needlework and embroideries; such work seems to have formed the principal occupation of ladies of position, and numerous specimens which remain of hangings and coverlets of beds, coverings of furniture, panels and book-covers are amongst the most characteristic examples of art during the reigns of the first two Stuarts.

CHAPTER II. THE PERIOD OF INIGO JONES

SINCE the days of the Italian Renaissance, the history of the art of the rest of Europe shows a parallel development in different countries, the gradual intermingling of the Renaissance and Gothic styles, followed by the exclusion of the Gothic, and the final triumph of classic principles. In England, however, such development was complicated early in the seventeenth century by the genius of Inigo Jones, who stands apart from all his contemporaries as an exponent of classic knowledge.

The ban of Excommunication against Queen Elizabeth had during her reign so severed this country from direct intercourse with Italy that knowledge of the new classic art had to be obtained through other channels. Its effects, however, were now becoming less acute, although even at a later date it was somewhat unsafe for Protestant "heretics" to travel in Italy, at all events in the parts still under Spanish sway. The fact of Inigo Jones being a Catholic obviated such difficulties in his case and helped him in acquiring his knowledge of the art of Ancient Rome earlier than his fellow countrymen.

Like the English nobles and architects who studied in Italy a century later, he absorbed the principles of classic architecture to the entire exclusion of other styles; especially he would seem to have profited by the treatises of Serlio, Perruzzi, Vignola, and Palladio, as well as by the actual buildings in Rome and Venice designed by these and the other great architects of the Renaissance. So thorough was the knowledge that he thus acquired, and so masterful the supervision of the work which, on his return to this country, he undertook, that examples of his skill, such as the Banqueting Hall in Whitehall, are as pure specimens of classic architecture as any buildings since erected; the more remarkable does this appear when it is realized that during his time houses were still being erected all over England strictly faithful to the Elizabethan traditions.

To anyone familiar with the examples of Dutch and Flemish architecture at the beginning of the seventeenth century, it is difficult to believe that Inigo Jones had not also travelled these countries; possibly they were included in "the politer parts of Europe," which he admits having visited as well as Italy; indeed, it would seem that his decorative work, and certainly that of his son-in-law, Webb, were affected by Dutch as well as by Italian influence.

Possibly few architects have had so many designs attributed to them as Inigo Jones on no evidence but tradition. Records, however, prove his work at Whitehall, Greenwich, Cobham, Castle Ashby, York Gate, Kirby, Ford Abbey

Abbey and Wilton; nor is there any reason to question such examples as Coleshill and Rainham. These specimens alone are sufficient to justify his great reputation. Walpole's statement that he saved "England from the disgrace of not having her representative among the arts," was made at a time when the names of Palladio and Inigo Jones were almost worshipped, but no one even to-day disputes his position as England's greatest architect.

Authentic examples of his work only exist in such buildings as have already been referred to, these have been so often illustrated that it is unnecessary to do so here. The chimney-piece on page 15 possesses several characteristics from which one could imagine that rumour, which has attributed its design to him, may in this case be correct. The design of the one on the previous page, although it shows a distinct departure from the usual Flemish work of the period, by no means adheres strictly to classic principles, and can only claim to represent the beginning of his influence. The illustration of the third chimney-piece, which dates from the middle of the seventeenth century, is given not as an example of the work of Inigo Jones but to show the quiet dignity and the knowledge of true proportion which he imparted to Webb and his other immediate pupils and successors. The staircase which is also shown (page 13) was erected in 1729, but was admittedly copied from his design; in many respects it resembles the one at Coleshill.

In addition to some drawings by Inigo Jones of scenes for masques (still preserved at Chatsworth), Lord Burlington obtained early in the eighteenth century the copy of *Vitruvius* containing his sketches and notes. Dr Clarke, another celebrated amateur architect, had also acquired several of his original drawings, as well as the copy of *Palladio* (bequeathed in 1736 to Worcester College, Oxford) which Inigo Jones on his journeys through Italy had copiously noted and interleaved with sketches. These, with the examples in the buildings referred to, served Kent, Ware, Gibbs, Swann and others as models for ceilings, chimney-pieces, doors, staircases and other features of internal decoration. Through such sources the influence of Inigo Jones was strongly felt in England down to the end of the eighteenth century.

There is little to relate in decorative or any other arts in England after the outbreak of the Civil War, but by then the last survivals of Gothic art had disappeared from this country. Not unnaturally, Inigo Jones was a stanch loyalist; he suffered considerably in the cause of his master. In 1643 he was deprived of his offices and had to leave London; a few years later he was

fined

STAIRCASE FROM
DESIGN BY
INIGO JONES

CHIMNEY-PIECE, CIRCA 1620

CHIMNEY-PIECE, CIRCA 1640.

CHIMNEY-PIECE, MIDDLE OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

fined about £1,000. He died in 1652, and certain works which he had commenced were completed by his son-in-law, John Webb.

Period of Inigo Jones

At the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, Webb applied for the office of Surveyor-General, which Inigo Jones had held: for political reasons it was given to Sir John Denham, and he was promised the reversion. However, when it fell vacant in 1666, Wren, whose fame by then was firmly established, was appointed, and Webb, again disappointed, gave up his practice and retired to the country.

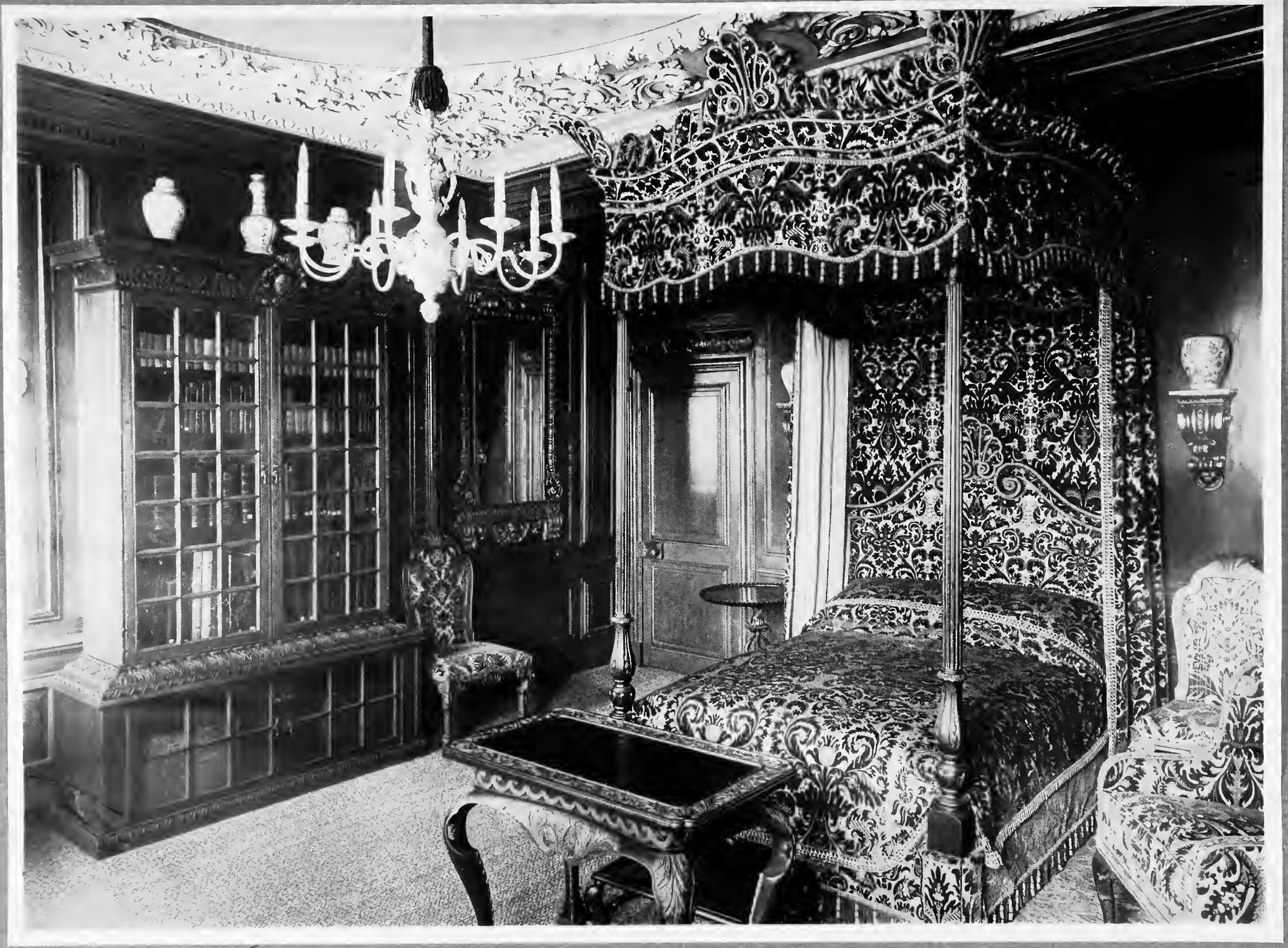
CHAPTER III. THE PERIOD OF WREN

WITH the return of King Charles II and the courtiers who had accompanied him into exile, the building of many great houses commenced, but it is curious how few of these remain to-day. Arlington House, Berkeley House, Suffolk House, Cleveland House, Goring House and Clarendon House are some out of many which have disappeared from London alone. We read of the wonderful treasures which they contained. For instance, according to Evelyn, in 1663, the new dressing-room at Goring House contained "a bed, two glasses, silver jars and vases, cabinets and other so rich furniture as I had seldom seen; to this excess of superfluity were we now arrived and that not only at Court but almost universal, even to wantonness and profusion." None approached the magnificence of the apartments at Whitehall Palace; there, the various mistresses of the King seem to have competed with each other in endeavouring to impoverish him by their extravagance in furniture and decoration. In 1664 Pepys finds "such variety of pictures and other things of value and rarity that I was properly confounded and enjoyed no pleasure in the sight, although it is the only time in my life that ever I was at a loss for pleasure in the greatest plenty of objects to give it to me." But the treasures which had accumulated in this Palace (many of which were gifts or bribes from Louis XIV and foreign ambassadors) were, in 1691, "destroyed by a terrible fire, beginning at the apartment of the late Duchess of Portsmouth, which had been pulled down and rebuilt no less than three times to please her," and after another fire in 1698 Evelyn relates, "Whitehall burned, nothing but walls and ruins left."

However, if the Palaces of Whitehall and Theobalds and so many great houses have disappeared, the age was prolific in domestic architecture, and until recently London contained numerous examples; to-day they are becoming scarce. The old parts of Kensington Palace (formerly Nottingham House), some of the Inns of Court and Chelsea Hospital are perhaps the best known.

The particular style of interior decoration, which commenced with the Restoration and continued till the early part of the eighteenth century, is considered by many to be the most attractive of any period, and it is with this that the names of Sir Christopher Wren and Grinling Gibbons are so much associated. The most characteristic decorative feature is the panelling either in oak, in cedar or in fir. At N° 31 Old Burlington Street are

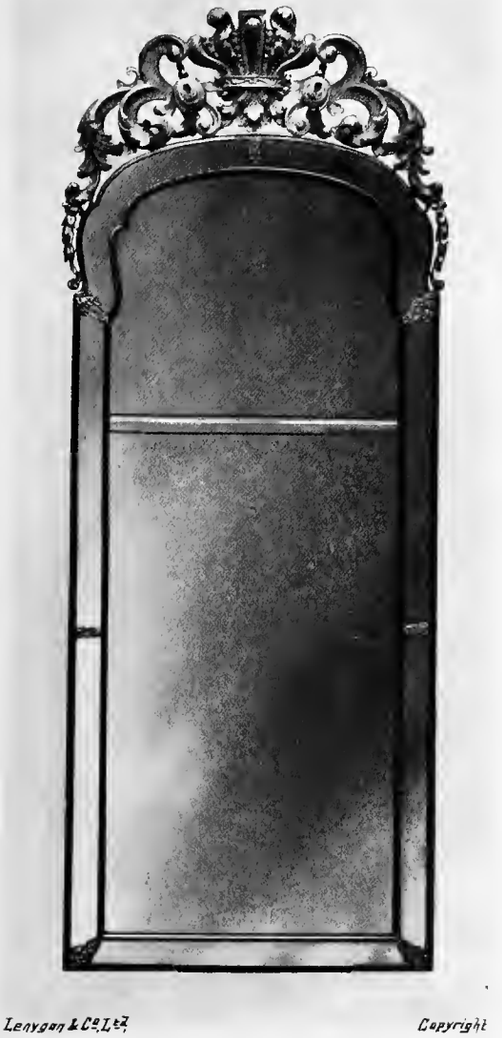
apartments



THE "WREN ROOM" AT 31 OLD BURLINGTON STREET, W.

TABLE INLAID WITH EBONY AND BOXWOOD SHOWING DUTCH INFLUENCE

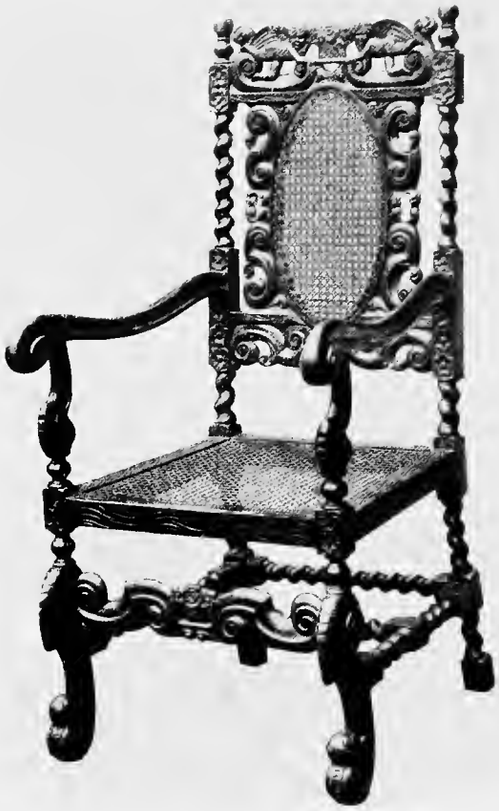
FIRE-DOG, BRONZE, ENAMELLED WITH THE STUART COAT-OF-ARMS, ETC.



LARGE MIRROR WITH VAUXHALL GLASS, LATTER PART OF SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

MIRROR WITH WALNUT FRAME ORNAMENTED WITH MARQUETERIE IN STAINED WOODS

TYPES OF CHAIRS
DURING THE EARLIER
PART OF THE
PERIOD OF WREN



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TYPES OF CHAIRS
USED
IN GREAT HOUSES
DURING THE LATER
PERIOD OF WREN

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TABLE OF CLASSIC DESIGN, THE INLAY ON TOP EDGED WITH STRIPS OF SILVER

CHILD'S CHAIR, CIRCA 1660

INLAID CABINET, THE CARVING ON LEGS PARTLY GILT

TABLE (WITH MARBLE TOP), THE CARVING SHOWING THE RETURN OF ITALIAN INFLUENCE

apartments illustrative of each. Both the one of fir (now painted the original "drab" colour) and the other of oak were removed from N° 1 Brick Court, Temple, a building erected during the reign of Charles I, and recently demolished. The Cedar Room (facing page 1) in the same collection represents the more ornate work of the period, the cornices, architraves and other mouldings being all elaborately carved, and pendants of lime-wood, in the manner of Grinling Gibbons, ornamenting each side of the chimney-breast. The various sections of the heavy bolection mouldings of the old marble jambs which surround the openings of each of the fireplaces are also typical of the times.

Celia Fiennes on her visits to many country houses in various parts of England particularly noted the inlaid floors which she found in some of the most important mansions. The description in her diary (*temp.* William and Mary) of one "inlayd with cyphers and the coronet" would apply equally to the floor in this Cedar Room; indeed, so fine is this inlaid work that the use in former times of leather covers for its protection during the owner's absence is easily understood.

In several great English houses there still exist inlaid floors of this description, one of the best examples being in the small room leading off the long gallery at Drayton. Many instances are also met with in which, instead of crests and ciphers, merely a geometrical pattern has been adopted, usually radiating from a star in the centre of the room. In such cases, in order to give prominence to the pattern, different kinds of wood are employed, varying in colour.

It was probably such a design that Evelyn refers to in the Duke of Norfolk's "new palace at Weybridge," where he finds that "the roomes were wainscotted and some of them parquetted with cedar, yew, cypresse, etc."

In another house he notices that "one of the closets is parquetted with plain deal set in diamond exceeding staunch and pretty."

In many of the mansions in Holland, built about the middle of the seventeenth century, the floors were similarly treated, sometimes with quite elaborate scroll-work designs in which the colours of the wood are very cleverly blended; instances also occur in French palaces built during the reign of Louis XIV.

Special reference has been made to this form of ornamenting floors with decorative designs, since the fashion is one which seems hardly understood to-day; although now, as during the seventeenth century, loose rugs are often

often employed (instead of carpets covering the entire surface), and in such cases this method of ornamenting floors with various shades of lighter woods on a darker background is peculiarly successful as a means of completing the decorative treatment of a fine apartment.

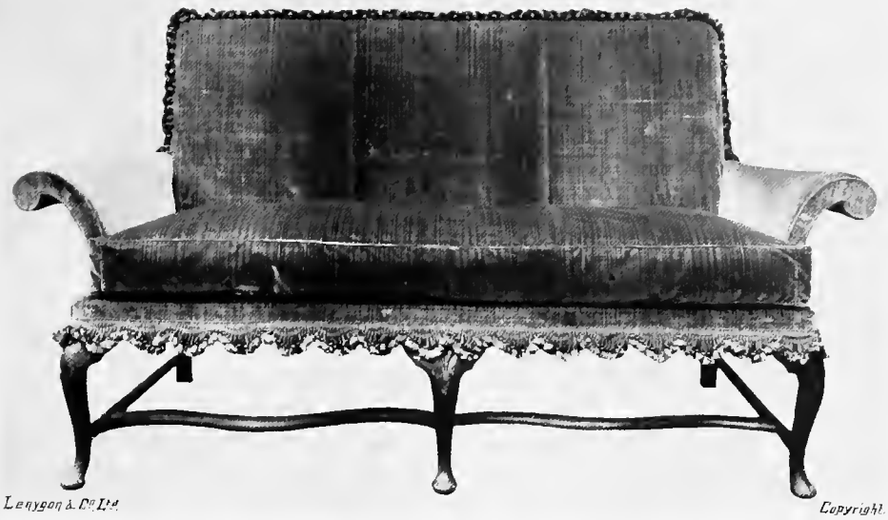
The Cedar Room at N° 31 Old Burlington Street serves as an example of the refinement of the wealth and luxury of the age; but the same collection contains another room more closely identified with the genius of Wren, for its chimney-piece and parts of the panelling were removed from a house at Bow, in which the great architect lived at some period after the Great Fire (probably whilst engaged on the City churches). This apartment, known as the "Wren Room," shown on page 19, is plainer than the Cedar Room, and is typical of the principal chamber in an ordinary house at the latter part of the seventeenth century. It is panelled throughout with fir wood, now generally called deal, or pine, just then beginning to take the place of oak, not altogether as being less expensive, but because it was more suitable for painting or graining, then regarded by many as better decorative treatment than the plain oak which for so long had been in vogue. To-day, it would be difficult to convince anyone of its superior merit, but it will be admitted that no more satisfactory background could possibly be found for fine furniture such as this room contains.

In the scheme of interior decoration which Wren adopted, there is no more characteristic feature than the ceiling; the geometrical patterns of Elizabethan and early Tudor times had been superseded by the formal classic style of Inigo Jones, which Wren to some extent adopted, while at the same time introducing that peculiar free elaboration of ornament so characteristic of all his work. The ceilings, both in this and in the Cedar Room, are of considerable interest and are described in the chapter on Plaster Ornamentation.

Wood carvings of the school of Grinling Gibbons and decorative paintings, both for walls and ceilings, are integral parts of the scheme of embellishment of fine apartments during the Wren period, but each of these subjects is also separately dealt with.

It cannot be claimed that contemporary furniture was influenced by Wren to the same degree as architecture and decoration; but, during his period, which may be taken as commencing at the Restoration, when he was twenty-eight years of age, and lasting until the accession of George I, when he was still Surveyor-General, a complete evolution, development and practical abandonment of one particular style occurred. The style referred to is sometimes

classified



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SETTEE UPHOLSTERED IN VELVET,
END OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

CHINA CABINET, CROSS-BANDED
WITH WALNUT VENEER

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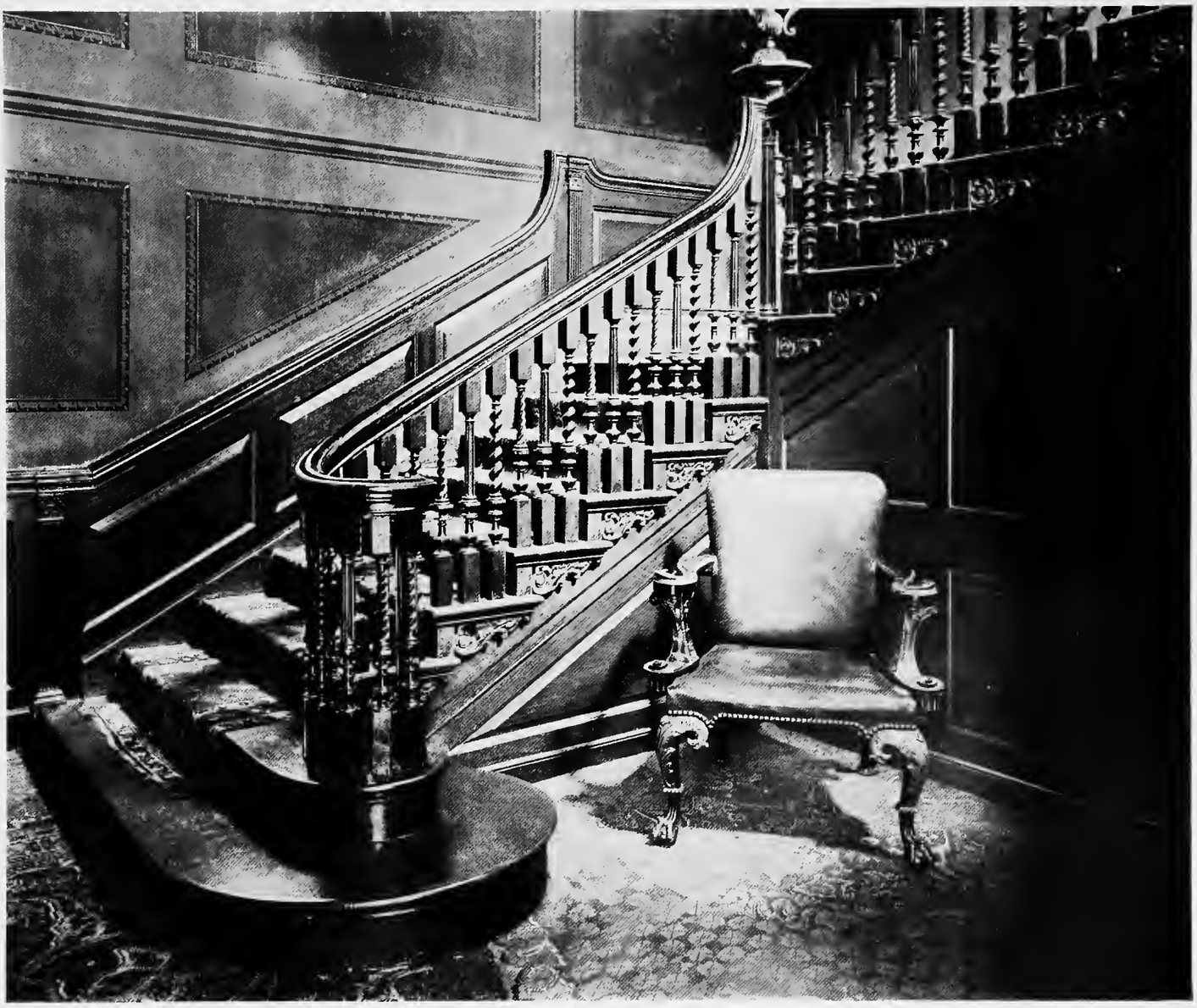
CHAIR WITH ENCLOSED ARMS AND SQUAB SEAT



STAIRCASE IN THE STYLE OF WREN

classified under the "Age of Walnut," and it is true that such wood was then more largely employed than at any other period, but by no means exclusively, even for the finest examples. Period of Wren

English mansions contained but little luxurious furniture previous to the reign of Charles II; indeed, in this respect, we ranked far behind Continental countries. The earlier examples of the improved furniture introduced after the Restoration were to some extent developments of preceding cruder models, but the refinements were almost entirely due to influences from Holland, which country, having learned from Portugal, Spain and Italy, had developed her own styles and had become the recognized authority on matters of luxury. The "Farthingale" chairs (shown on page 7) dates from somewhat earlier than the Restoration, but the chairs shown on page 22, and the child's chair, page 24, are fine examples illustrating the luxury of the early part of the new reign. Other specimens, also shown on page 23, dating from a few years later are equally interesting.

It was at about this time that marqueterie was perfected and the table on page 21 is an excellent example of this class of work. It is, however, more difficult than at any other period to locate accurately exact dates of manufacture; Dutch influence was paramount, and whether the articles were made in Holland some ten or twenty years earlier than when reproductions, sometimes by the same workmen, were made in England cannot be authoritatively stated. Another example of marqueterie is the fine cabinet shown on page 24, and on this piece the vase-shaped bases and the feet are partly gilt, a method of decorating both furniture and mouldings which came into fashion at this period and which became so much in vogue during the early eighteenth century.

In order to display Oriental china and Delf pottery, the collection of which both in Holland and England had become an absolute mania, cabinets, corner cupboards, chimney shelves, tops of cabinets, and in fact every available space was utilized. No doubt it was for such purpose that the specimen illustrated on page 27 was designed. A feature of this class of furniture was the peculiar cross-banding and the careful selection of the wood with which such work was executed.

An entire chapter might be devoted to the successive styles of fire-dogs employed in England previous to the introduction of enclosed grates early in the eighteenth century. During the Wren period they were usually of brass or iron, the stems somewhat resembling the form of contemporary chandeliers

chandeliers. The frequency with which such fire-dogs are illustrated in earlier Dutch pictures proclaims their origin; several instances exist in which they are of silver, highly ornamented. Another variety was of bronze, enamelled in various colours, as in the example illustrated on page 21, the design of which is Atlantes supporting the arms borne by the Stuart Kings.

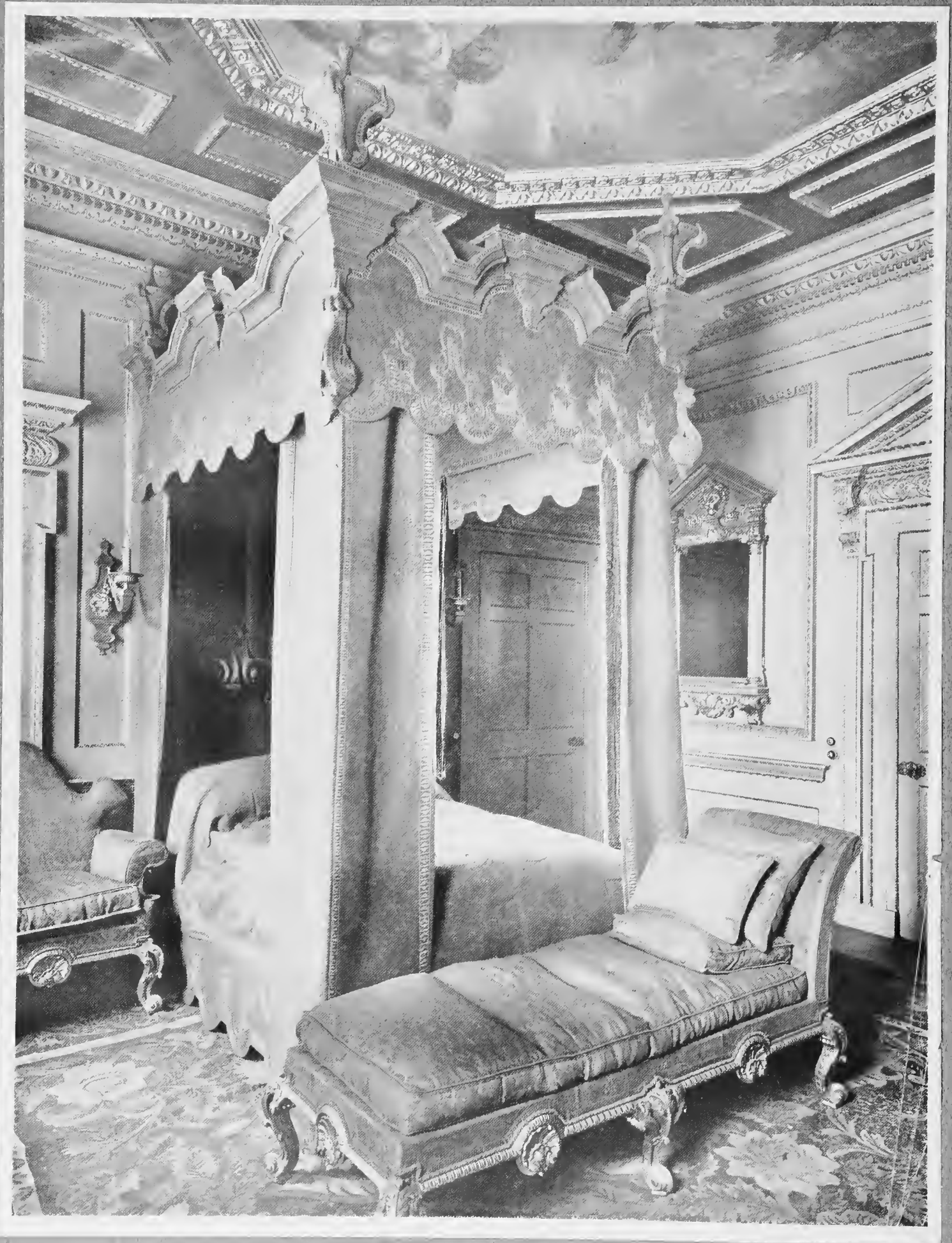
It is to the Stuarts that we owe the earliest manufactories of glass mirrors in England. Evelyn refers to his visit in 1673 "to the Italian glass house at Greenwich where glasse was blown of finer mettal than that of Murano at Venice," and again in 1676 to the new works at Lambeth, where he "saw the Duke of Buckingham's Glasse Worke where they made huge vases of mettal as clear and ponderous and thick as chrystal, also looking-glasses far larger and better than any that came from Venice."

From this time forward, no room was considered complete without one or more examples, and the very fine mirror (shown on page 21) possesses particular interest as being similar to the celebrated pair in the State Room at Hampton Court, and like those examples, has the quaint double bevelling and incised line on the glass borders so peculiar to this period.

Compared to the price at which it can now be obtained, glass for mirrors was then very costly, and naturally elaborate frames were often used, sometimes decorated with the finest marqueterie, as the specimen also shown on page 21. Silver furniture was peculiar to and one of the greatest extravagances of this age, and mirror frames, as well as chairs, tables, and fire-irons were so manufactured.

The chair shown at the bottom of page 23, which is one of a set of twelve, is curious as an example of the tortoise-shell lacquer with which some of the finest furniture was then decorated: the top of the frame is carved with scroll ornament, this carving being gilded. The arm-chair with cane seat and back shown at the top of the same page may be considered typical of the reign of William and Mary, but it is most unusual to find a specimen where the carving is so elaborate or the design so graceful.

The two tables illustrated on page 24, although dating from the seventeenth century, bear little trace of Dutch influence, in fact are amongst the first examples of English furniture in which Italian feeling again predominates.



SECOND STATE ROOM AT 31 OLD BURLINGTON STREET

CHAPTER IV
THE PERIOD OF WILLIAM KENT

PREVIOUSLY to the Hanoverian Dynasty, each of the occupants of the throne was closely identified with the developments of art during his respective reign. The negative influence of the first two Georges is due partly to their own characters and partly to the development of history; yet, although the correct principles of classic art were first introduced to England by Inigo Jones and practised by his successors Webb, Marsh, Gerbier, Talman, and less strictly by Wren and others, it was not until after the accession of George I that the Palladian rules were universally accepted as dominating architecture.

If, however, architecture then began to suffer from lack of Royal encouragement, it gained more than compensating advantages by the lavish expenditure in building by the great nobles and statesmen at this period, who vied with one another in fostering native genius. Without the encouragement of men like Lord Burlington, Lord Leicester, Lord Pembroke, Lord Hervey and Sir Robert Walpole, many of the artists and craftsmen of the early Georgian period might never have been heard of.

Among the various architects whose names became famous from such encouragement are Campbell and Ripley, both of whom claim a share in the glories of Houghton; Leoni, designer of Moor Park and Carshalton; Gibbs, responsible for the Radcliffe Library, Oxford, St Martin's Church and numerous London houses; but perhaps William Kent, whose principal claim as an architect rests on whatever share he may have had in the designs of Houghton and Holkham (both in Norfolk), the Horse Guards and Treasury Buildings, Devonshire House in Piccadilly and Lord Burlington's Villa at Chiswick, reflects more than any the spirit of the early Georgian times.

Apprenticed to a coach-painter in his native county of Yorkshire, ambition drove him to London, where he appears at first to have mainly devoted himself to portrait painting. Influential friends sent him to Italy; in Rome he obtained a prize for painting and was still more fortunate in attracting the attention of Lord Burlington, with whom he returned to England and in whose service he remained as art adviser for the rest of his life. He made subsequent journeys to Italy. In 1727, with the financial assistance of Lord Burlington, he published *The Designs of Inigo Jones*, with which a few drawings by Lord Burlington and himself are included. In 1726 he was made Master Carpenter of all His Majesty's Works and Buildings, to which office was added

Period of William Kent

was added that of "Keeper of Pictures" in 1736. He died in 1748, and, according to Horace Walpole, "his fortune, which with pictures and books amounted to about £10,000, he divided between his relations and an actress with whom he had long lived in particular friendship."

He attained a great reputation as architect, sculptor, painter, decorator, furniture designer and landscape gardener, indeed became the versatile man of taste of the day, whose advice it was the fashion to seek. As Walpole relates, "He was not only consulted for furniture, frames of pictures, glass, tables, chairs, etc., but for plate, for a barge and for a cradle, and so impetuous was fashion that two great ladies prevailed on him to make designs for their birthday gowns."

A man who from such humble origin could secure the lasting friendship of the cultured and gentle Earl of Burlington, could rise to such high office, and who could become dictator on all matters of taste at a period when so many noblemen and men of wealth were themselves critics of no mean order, must have possessed great talent and an extraordinary character.

Before, however, commencing to judge of the capabilities of William Kent it is necessary to realize his period and his opportunities. England was becoming immensely wealthy; a large proportion of the trade of Holland (England's commercial rival during the previous century) had gradually been absorbed by this country. The wars associated with the name of the Duke of Marlborough in the Netherlands, and the extravagance of Louis XIV had impoverished France. Venice and Genoa, as well as Spain, had long lost their commercial importance; indeed, England seemed to have been without rivals for the trade of the world, and the persistent peace policy of Sir Robert Walpole was enabling this trade to develop by leaps and bounds.

The court of the first two Georges offered few attractions to the great nobles and men of wealth, nor was there much scope for competition in politics during the long and all-powerful sway of Walpole. Further, the entire absence of hostilities left no opportunities for obtaining distinction in military or naval careers, and it would seem that numbers of these great nobles and men of leisure embraced the study of art as the principal occupation of their lives. The particular branch of art which interested them most keenly was the pure classic architecture of Ancient Rome. Notwithstanding the splendid earlier efforts of Inigo Jones and others, England was far behind France in examples of such Renaissance architecture. Except for these earlier efforts, building in this country was dominated in the early part of the preceding

ceding century by Flemish, and during the whole of the latter part by Dutch influences; the fact that England now asserted entire supremacy over its old rival, the Dutch Republic, no doubt caused public taste unfairly to depreciate the charming examples erected during the previous reigns partly under such guidance. The votaries of the new school were also unreasonably prejudiced against the work of the Wren period by the discovery that, although classic in principle, the rules laid down by the great architects of the Italian Renaissance had by no means been strictly adhered to.

Period of William Kent

This feeling alone accounts for much of the prejudice which existed against Sir Christopher at the close of his brilliant career and for the exaltation of the earlier work of Inigo Jones; indeed, this new school accepted so fervently the principles of Italian classic art as the only form of true culture, that all buildings which exhibited variations were regarded by them as beneath notice or consideration.

The nobles obtained their knowledge of classic art in Italy, where they studied the ancient models and also the best as well as the decadent examples of the Renaissance. They found numerous treatises by the great architects of the fifteenth and sixteenth century, whose teachings many of them grasped sufficiently to themselves become capable critics. From among these various authors they accepted Palladio as their standard, and, by glorifying his work and his precepts, raised him in their time almost to the position of a demigod.

William Kent undoubtedly was of immense service to his patrons in helping them to adapt this Palladian architecture to the requirements of the mansions they were erecting and transforming in England, and it was this advisory position that causes his name to be connected with so many buildings, the actual design of which others claim. But a difficulty presented itself. Although his patrons could find precedents for what may be termed external architecture, internally their mansions had to vary from any original examples they could discover in Italy, in order to meet the English standard of luxury and refinement and the altered conditions necessitated by difference in climate. At the same time, such internal decoration and furniture had to harmonize with their classic edifices.

William Kent and Lord Burlington had first met in Rome, but spent most of their time while together in Italy at Vicenza and the neighbouring towns of Verona and Venice, the district most closely identified with the work of Palladio. The decorative work employed by this great architect was far too austere

austere and cheerless to serve as a model for an English home, and furniture, regarded as articles of comfort, had not existed in his time. But of what was then modern work they found no lack of examples.

During the latter part of the seventeenth century the taste for elaborate interior decorations and gorgeous furniture had been a craze in Italy, and all had been designed for classic buildings by men who knew no other style. Although much of such work had great merit, yet it all suffered more or less from the evil influence of the *barocco* which had been rampant in Italy during that period. It would appear greatly to the credit of William Kent that, although his subsequent work was influenced by such examples, he succeeded in avoiding the coarseness which was then, as now, a characteristic of Italian furniture.

Furniture designed by Kent is sometimes referred to as clumsy, but the criticism is hardly just. Compared to Italian models, his work represents the acme of refinement, and it must be remembered that the lighter furniture of Chippendale, Adam, Sheraton and others, to which we are now accustomed, was after the time of Kent; and it must also be always remembered that Kent did not design or work for people of small means; his furniture and decorations were invariably intended for stately classic mansions. For instance, such examples as the settee and the pedestal (page 37) are intended as units of sets of similar pieces in a classic hall of large proportions, and given such an apartment no articles of furniture could more aptly fill their decorative functions. Again, for an important reception-room nothing could be more suitable than the "Kent" table shown at the top of page 40; it is as refined and as dignified as any that the corresponding schools of Louis XIV or early Louis XV have to offer. Another example, equally effective, is the side-table also illustrated on the same page, which is one of a pair in the same collection. This piece possesses particular interest, as the original drawing is in Vardy's book of Kent's designs, and is stated by him to have been for his patron, Lord Burlington.

Before disparaging the designs of William Kent, the book-case illustrated on page 41 should be studied: it is somewhat similar to one which, from Vardy's book, appears to have been in the Hermitage Room; like all Kent's furniture it is designed with the definite aim, not only of fulfilling its requirements as an article of utility, but also of forming a decorative object harmonizing with the style and character of the room. For such a purpose it causes Chippendale's most elaborate efforts to look commonplace.

The use

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PEDESTAL IN CARVED WOOD, GILT

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SETTEE DESIGNED BY WILLIAM KENT, UPHOLSTERED IN SCARLET VELVET

PEDESTAL CARVED IN MAHOGANY

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SIDE TABLE WITH MARBLE TOP, THE CARVED ORNAMENT ONLY GILT

LARGE MIRROR OF
CLASSIC DESIGN IN
CARVED WOOD, GILT

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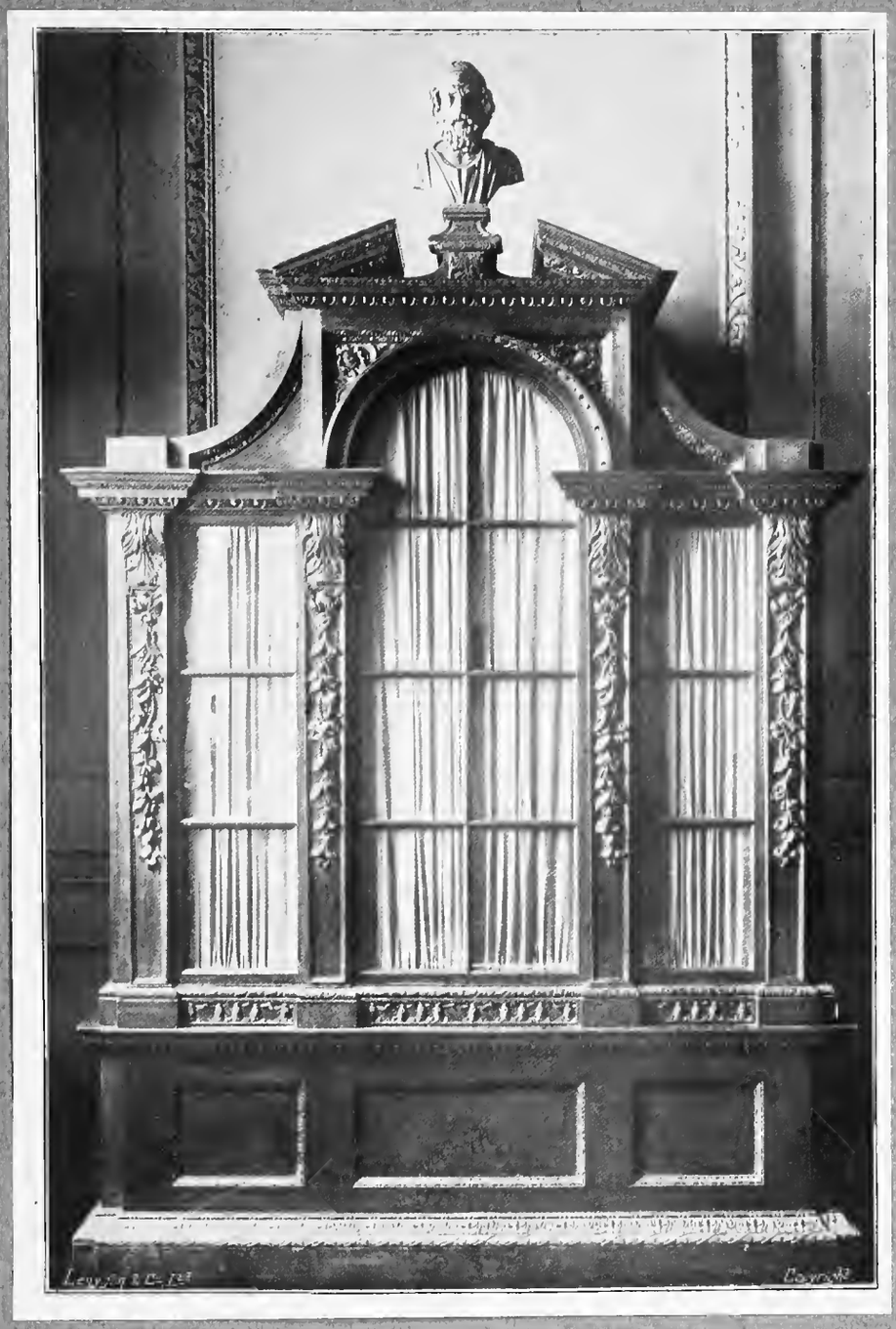
SIDE TABLE (WITH MARBLE TOP) IN CARVED WOOD, GILT, DESIGNED BY WILLIAM KENT

TYPES OF CHAIRS USED IN IMPORTANT APARTMENTS, PERIOD OF WILLIAM KENT

TABLE IN CARVED WOOD, GILT, THE MARBLE TOP ENCLOSED IN CHASED BRASS FRAME

SIDE TABLE IN CARVED WOOD, THE EAGLE GILT, PLATFORM AND ROCK WORK PAINTED

TABLE, DESIGNED BY WILLIAM KENT FOR LORD BURLINGTON



BOOKCASE, PERIOD OF WILLIAM KENT

Period of William Kent

The use of large mirrors as decorative objects had been introduced into England in the preceding reigns, as witness the magnificent examples at Hampton Court, but it is to William Kent and his school that we owe the development of this means of obtaining fine decorative effects. The design of the mirror illustrated on page 38 shows one of his most successful efforts. With such models as these and others undoubtedly by him, such as exist at Houghton, at Holkham, Wilton, Coleshill and Ditchley, and other great English mansions, it is difficult to realize why the name of Kent has previously been so disregarded as a designer of decorative English furniture. Had Kent worked in France, instead of in England, his name would have been world-wide and examples of his craft would have been almost priceless.

Now, to consider William Kent as what may be termed an architect of interiors; and some such term is necessary to distinguish his style from that of the mere decorator. It is rare to be able to point to rooms in English houses as being typical of any particular period, as subsequent alterations have generally ruined the original effect, but the whole suite of reception-rooms at Houghton Hall in Norfolk (excluding two apartments redecorated for the visit of the Prince Regent, and for the absence of the pictures purchased by the Empress Catherine of Russia) remain the same to-day as when William Kent finished them for the occupation of his patron, the great Sir Robert Walpole.

The original effect of the exterior architecture of this magnificent building has been spoilt by the removal of the great steps leading up to the first, originally the entrance, floor; there is some doubt as to the respective parts due to the various architects who were employed, but as to the complete interior decoration there is no question: William Kent was entirely responsible, and Laguerre, Rysbrack, Artari and others worked for him there.

Neither England nor France have ever produced anything finer than the stone Hall at Houghton; it completely fulfils its purpose, a purpose which aimed at displaying majesty, harmony and grace, as should befit the palace of the first statesman of the day; it remains a monument to the genius of the man who designed and executed the work, and the greatness of the colossal gambler for whom the work was done. All is noble, from the dignified proportions to the perfect distribution of the parts; the frieze of boys and festoons is a masterpiece of composition and modelling. The magnificent collection of gilt and partly gilt furniture, undoubtedly due to Kent, is essentially part of the building; tables, settees and chairs are admirably designed with shells,

festoons

festoons and acanthus foliage, whilst the faces of women, so often carved in his most characteristic pieces, are of no little beauty, and are executed with great feeling and perfect finish.

Probably it was from the neighbouring mansion at Rainham, that masterpiece of domestic architecture erected by Inigo Jones some hundred years earlier, that William Kent first learned to appreciate the work of his predecessor, an admiration which strongly influenced his whole career. So thoroughly does he seem to have absorbed the feeling of that great master that, although it is known he carried out important improvements to the interior of Rainham, it cannot to-day be authoritatively stated which are the parts representing his work.

Holkham, the other great house in the same county, remains a monument to the skill and ability of Kent, both as adviser on its architecture, as responsible for its decorations, and as designer of much of the furniture it contains. The work here occupied the latter part of his career; Brettingham, in his work on Holkham (published in 1761), claims the greater share as the designer of this, one of England's grandest mansions, an assertion which Walpole, who had seen a hundred times Kent's original drawings, indignantly refutes.

Another nobleman for whom Kent worked extensively was William, 3rd Duke of Devonshire, the stables at Chatsworth and the town house in Piccadilly being designed by him; the latter he appears to have completely furnished and decorated.

No doubt, when carriages took the place of sedan-chairs, the substitution of the double flight of steps (which originally led up to the first floor of this mansion) for the present portico was necessary; the alteration, however, is to be regretted since it changed the character of the principal elevation and transformed the basement into the entrance floor, thus rendering Kent's original scheme of planning unsuitable, and entailing a new staircase and various other alterations.

The pillars surmounted with sphinxes on the Piccadilly side of the courtyard (which support Tijou's beautiful iron gates) are also by Kent, and were brought from the villa at Chiswick, which he built for Lord Burlington on the lines of Palladio's villa Capra, near Vicenza. The possession of these by the Devonshire family is accounted for through the marriage of the 4th Duke with the only surviving daughter and heiress of Kent's principal patron.

Traces of the art of Kent are to be seen in nearly every room in Devon-

shire House, the ball-room and the *salon* remaining almost exactly as completed by him. These two magnificent state apartments are certainly the finest in London, even if they can be surpassed in any palace in Europe. Both here, at Chatsworth, and at the other seats of the Cavendishes, as would be expected considering the patronage by their Georgian ancestors, are also to be found some of the finest examples of the furniture which Kent designed.

Period of William Kent

One of the great houses, if not the greatest, built in England during the reign of George I was for Sir Richard Child at Wanstead. Campbell was the architect, but William Kent occupied the same advisory position as at Houghton and Holkham. Illustrative of the respect in which his abilities were held, Mrs Lybbe Powys, writing in 1771 (more than thirty years after his death), relates how she found his portrait over the chimney-piece in the Great Hall of what was "reckoned the finest house in the kingdom." This mansion was destroyed in 1822, when the sale of its treasures occupied thirty-two days.

Henry Pelham, first Lord of the Treasury, employed Kent both at Esher and for his new house in Arlington Street (now N° 17), the interior of which is still most interesting, not only as an almost untouched example of his work, but also as a model of perfect decoration for a town house.

The Museum at South Kensington is curiously deficient in examples of English arts and crafts of the early eighteenth century, and all it possesses to illustrate the skill of Kent is the State barge which he designed for Frederick, Prince of Wales, the drawings for which are contained in the rarer editions of Vardy's book.

Unfortunately it is by his work, actual and reputed, at Kensington Palace that the ability of Kent is popularly judged, although, when inquired into, this would seem hardly fair. George I was not notorious for extravagance in building, and most certainly he was no authority on matters of taste, and Kent, to the prejudice of his reputation, provided a show of grandeur which gave the greatest satisfaction to his Royal client and at a price which cannot be termed excessive, £340 2s. 7d. being all that was paid for the whole of the decoration of the Cube Room. Again, it must be always remembered that for sixty years the Palace was in a deplorable state of disrepair, and "with leaking roofs and floors crumbling away," little can remain of the original decorative painting; in justice to William Kent the effect of previous as well as recent restorations must be considered.

At the present day Kent is ignored by the many and harshly criticized by the

Period of William Kent

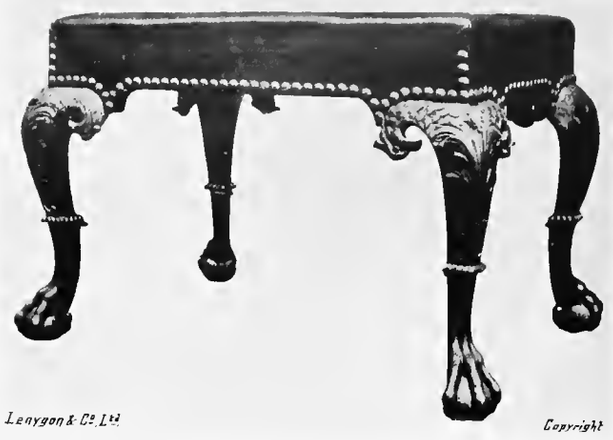
by the few; one or two modern writers have embellished their pages with illustrations of his work, while at the same time they timidly abuse him for no apparent reason beyond lack of authority for praising him. Volumes have been written in praise of Chippendale and Robert Adam, yet the former, brilliant workman as he was, had the characteristics of an enterprising tradesman, changing his style with every passing fashion of the day. Robert Adam, in the second half of the century, was to some extent a parallel to Kent in the first; both were architects and decorators, conceiving the furniture of the house to be an essential part of the whole. Chippendale and Adam both appealed to the public; Kent, on the other hand, worked only for a few distinguished clients, and had little or no sympathy with the tastes of the middle-classes, and examples of his skill are only to be found in the greatest houses. As a painter of pictures distinct from decorative paintings it must be admitted his talents were mediocre. As an architect it is only recently that his work has begun to be again appreciated; certainly it appeals principally to those who, having studied classic art in Italy, can trace his inspirations and appreciate his ideals. Horace Walpole, who was by no means blind to his failings, regarded him as "the restorer of the science of architecture."

In another part of this book, when dealing with the subject of Plaster Ornamentation, a number of further illustrations are given of other decorative work designed by William Kent; the examples in question are at N° 30 Old Burlington Street, a mansion built for Sir Michael Newton in 1730. They are particularly interesting as, although numerous specimens exist in country-houses, in London they are extremely rare, at all events in such an untouched condition as may be seen in this house.

Whether the decoration of the two Staterooms in the adjoining house (N° 31 Old Burlington Street), one of which is illustrated in the frontispiece and the other on page 32, are actually his work is immaterial. To quote Walpole, "Kent's style predominated authoritatively during his life"; moreover, he was closely associated with the immediate locality; if not his work they are essentially typical of that early Georgian school of which he was so notable a member. Every detail in them exhibits the care, the thought, the knowledge and the skill which was then bestowed both by patron, designer and craftsmen on decorative work; these two rooms are entitled to rank with any even at Houghton or Holkham; indeed, they are often considered the most perfect interiors we possess of the greatest period of English decorative art.

The amount

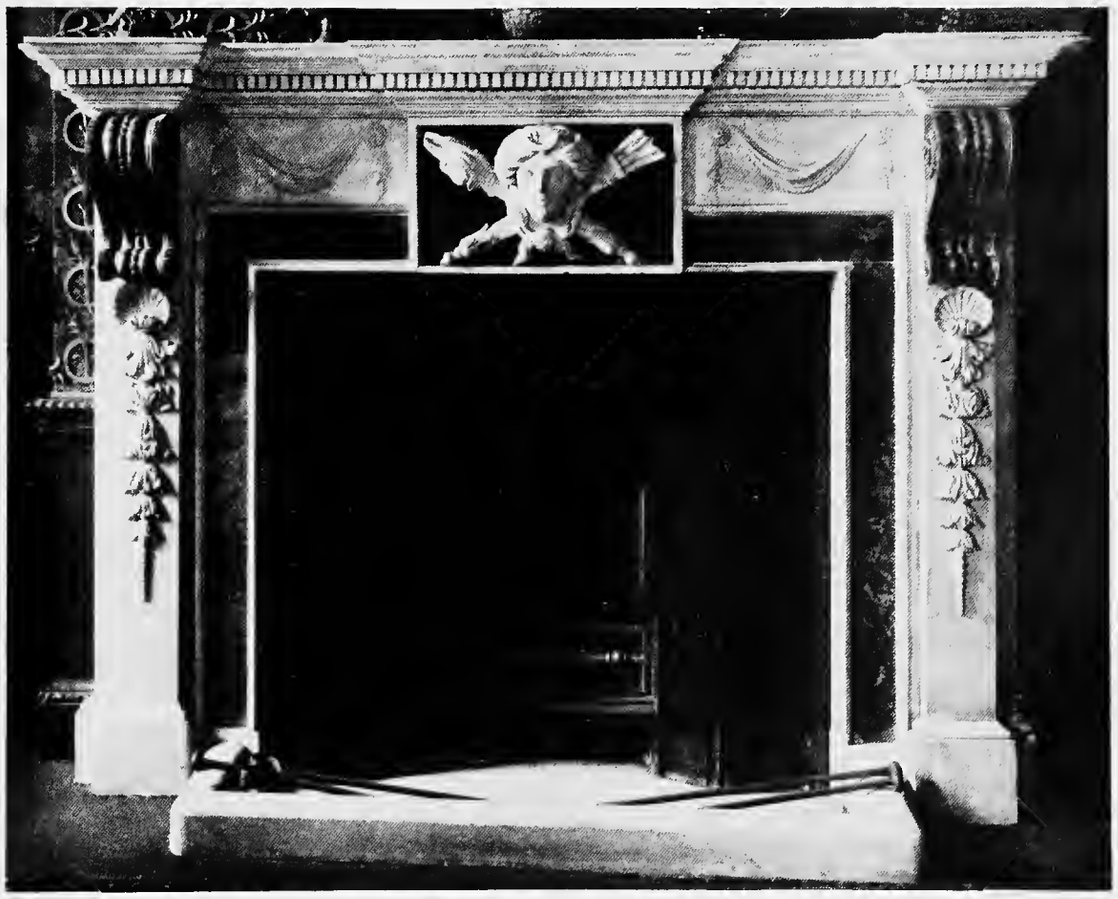
STOOL IN CARVED WOOD GILT



STOOL, WALNUT, THE CARVED ORNAMENT GILT

SIDE-TABLE (WITH MARBLE TOP) IN CARVED WOOD GILT, DESIGNED BY WILLIAM KENT

PEDIMENTS OF MIRRORS IN CARVED WOOD GILT



MANTELPIECE IN MARBLES OF VARIOUS COLOURS

MIRROR (7 ft. 9 ins. high)
DESIGNED BY
WILLIAM KENT

The amount of money spent on marble mantelpieces made to his designs was very large; these were manufactured in London by Pickford and other makers from marble obtained from Italy; the one shown on page 48 is a particularly fine example and shows no trace of the unnecessary heaviness of the preceding generation, or of the feebleness produced by the "elegant" classic refinements of the succeeding age.

Although specimens of the furniture and decoration of the early Georgian period are more scarce than those of other dates, the collection from which most of the examples illustrated in this book are taken is remarkable in the number and variety it contains. Typical illustrations are the day-bed and sofa seen on page 32; the finely modelled and pierced scroll legs and other enrichments with which these are ornamented, show the magnificence then aimed at. As side-tables with elaborate stands (into which beautifully-carved figures were often introduced) are essentially a feature of the second quarter of the eighteenth century, three illustrations (*see* pages 37, 38 and 40) are given. The quality of the marble for the tops of these tables was also a subject which vastly interested the rich *virtuosi*, and no trouble or expense seems to have been too great to secure rare specimens from Italy: that country was then poor, and the rich travellers were not too scrupulous as to how the palaces and churches suffered to enable them to obtain objects with which to beautify their English homes.

Stools instead of chairs were now more frequent than at any successive period, partly as their use denoted some sign of class distinction or respect; partly as with the ample skirts worn by our ancestors they must have been more convenient, and partly as stools arranged round a state apartment impart a more dignified or classic appearance than a succession of chairs. These stools, however, only formed part of the complete suite; single arm-chairs, settees, and day-beds to match were necessary for the complete furnishing. The elaborate gilt stool with X-shaped legs shown on page 47 is very similar to those designed by William Kent, which still exist at Kensington Palace. The other example on the same page is particularly interesting, as both at Chatsworth and Houghton exist arm-chairs of exactly the same design, and evidently by the same maker.

Pedestals to support the marble busts and bronzes, which the cultured travellers were bringing from Italy, were required; the designing of these afforded further scope for the skill of Kent and the other decorative artists of his day. Two illustrations (page 37) are given of particularly fine examples.

Considering

Period of William Kent

Considering the importance attached to such articles, further illustrations of the fine mirrors of this period are also given (*see* pages 38, 48 and 49). These, varying in composition, serve to show the classic feeling and yet the originality which imbued all decorative work in the early part of the eighteenth century.

No description of the furniture in use during this period would be complete without reference to the state beds, always considered necessary for the dignity of the owner and his important guests. A fine example can be seen in the room shown on page 32; in another apartment (*see* page 19) a perhaps finer model is exhibited, the character of which, however, is somewhat lost by the omission of the front curtains, in deference to modern hygiene. The fine Genoese velvet and the beautiful embroideries with which it is upholstered illustrate the wealth and extravagance of our Georgian ancestors.

STATE BEDSTEAD, CIRCA 1750, CORNICE AND PILLARS IN CARVED MAHOGANY, UPHOLSTERED IN DAMASK

CHAPTER V. THE LATTER HALF OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

AN implicit acceptation of ancient classic art as being alone worthy of consideration had for upwards of 150 years been the unswerving creed of every English architect, designer or craftsman, but at the middle of the eighteenth century the feeling was being replaced by a craving for something more modern or novel. This resulted in various styles and fashions being adopted, which rapidly superseded each other to suit the passing fancy of the day; a few architects, notably Chambers, Gandon, and Dance the younger, endeavoured to continue the classic traditions as practised by their predecessors, but their efforts seem to have been outshadowed by those whose work appealed to the popular demand for modern peculiarities.

The brothers Robert and James Adam most prominently represent the new school; indeed, the spirit of the age seems reflected in their claim "to have brought about a kind of revolution in this useful and elegant art." The particular individuality which their work expressed may be summed up as an attempt to refine classic ornament. In 1754 the elder brother, Robert, visited Italy and the eastern coast of the Adriatic. On his travels he met Piranesi, who had already published drawings of ancient buildings, and, until his death in 1779, this Italian architect continued to supply illustrations of antique Roman and Grecian ornament, the detail of which Robert Adam adapted as embellishment both for exteriors and interiors of buildings as well as for furniture and every kind of decorative object. There is much to admire in some of the earlier work, but their "improved" style soon degenerated into insincere, but inexpensive, reproduction of the antique, and its adoption and continuance in the hands of less capable successors clearly marks the decay of English art. However, the brothers Adam in one respect varied from their contemporaries: like their predecessor William Kent (whose later work inspired some of their most successful efforts), they accepted the theory that furniture and decoration should form parts of the complete design of the house, and several mansions were built and furnished ready for occupation under their superintendence; indeed, they seem to have combined in themselves the position of building speculators, architects, designers of furniture and of nearly every decorative article, including even counterpanes; but, apart from their versatile capabilities, the gradual disappearance of the influence of the architect from the interior decoration of the house is one of the most

Latter Half of the XVIII Century

the most notable features of the period. Other architects, trained by the fixed rules and principles which must necessarily govern construction, and to some extent even the external ornament of buildings, found themselves unable to cope with the vagaries which popular fancy, influenced largely by the exuberance of the school of Louis XV, was demanding.

In 1756 Isaac Ware published his *Complete Book of Architecture*, in which are detailed rules and precepts for designing ceilings, chimney-pieces, doors, and other interior decoration; but Ware belonged to the classic school which had flourished under the two first Georges, and had no sympathy with modern vagaries; he had seriously studied in Italy, had published, in 1738, his translation of the four books of Palladio, and had designed several noble mansions, including Chesterfield House. The protests in his book against the new innovations illustrate the changes then taking place. "Let us banish French, Chinese and Gothic decoration, equally mean and frivolous, equally unworthy of place where the sciences are observed and equally a disgrace to the taste of the proprietor," he writes; but still he feels it his duty to advise the student to study the "petty wildnesses" as well as "true and noble ornament," for, "unless he can conform himself to fancy as well work with judgment, he will do little in an age like this."

At the middle of the eighteenth century the trade of the furniture maker had largely increased, partly as it was the fashion to fill apartments with many more articles than were formerly considered necessary, and partly owing to the requirements of the rich traders, now becoming far more important than in the preceding generations; the wealth of this new class of customer was sufficient to provide him with any luxury or comfort which the age afforded, but naturally his views as to the size of house necessary to his position were more moderate. For such less important buildings lighter furniture was more suitable.

The age is remarkable for the skill of the designers and craftsmen who coped with this demand. In the previous generation the aim had been for the furniture to be suitable to the style of house for which it was required, but the efforts of the new school (of which the name of Chippendale is to-day the most prominent) whether in French, in Chinese, or in Gothic taste, were directed indiscriminately to adorning the somewhat uninteresting houses then being built in classic style by Paine, Vardy, Wood, Taylor and other architects of the period.

Literary experts have hitherto had little to say respecting the furniture

and decoration produced during the reigns of George I and George II, but it cannot be said that the fame of the brothers Adam, or of Chippendale, or his successors Locke and Copeland, Ince and Mayhew, Johnson, Manwaring, Shearer, Hepplewhite or Sheraton have suffered from such causes; indeed, so much has been written lately on the subject that it would seem unnecessary to repeat any details respecting their personality or their methods of working. Apart from the excellent book by Miss Constance Simon (to whose researches we are indebted for so many of the important known facts respecting these furniture designers of the latter half of the eighteenth century) much of recent literature on the subject consists of conjecture based on the prefaces, descriptions and designs which they each issued; indeed, without these published designs and fashion plates it is probable that we should have heard little of these craftsmen, as their names can only include a fraction of the furniture makers who worked in London alone during this half century.

That Chippendale himself had a fashionable clientele is obvious from the list of subscribers to his book, although they cannot compare in importance with those who subscribed for the designs published by William Kent a generation earlier. This fact hardly warrants his name being often adopted to describe nearly the whole of the furniture produced in England for upwards of a quarter of a century. When his workshop was consumed by fire in 1755, it contained but twenty workmen's chests, which would seem insufficient to have manufactured even a very small proportion of the "Chippendale" furniture which has recently appeared on the market. A writer in *Punch* has summed up the position. He claims to have ascertained the number of genuine Chippendale chairs owned by his relatives, and also found out that other people's relations were equally fortunate in the possession of such articles. From these data he calculates that Chippendale produced at least a chair every minute, day and night, during his whole life. As a matter of fact, with one exception, Chippendale does not even claim to have produced furniture in accordance with any of his published designs; they were merely intended for fashion plates, and as such were, no doubt, copied by other furniture makers, many of whom were subscribers, in other parts of the country.

His designs were to a great extent inspired by (in many cases practically copied from) the published drawings of Meissonier, Pineau, Oppenord and others of the school of Louis XV, in order to meet a craze for all things French which, about the middle of the eighteenth century, existed for a short time in this country.

To obtain

Latter Half of the XVIII Century

To obtain additional grandeur the mantelpieces were now frequently made in marble, and enormous sums were spent to secure the finest qualities of that material, especially, as Isaac Ware points out, "by those to whom expense is a recommendation (and there are too many of that class)." Exquisite as are many of the examples of these later Georgian marble mantels, it is doubtful whether their adoption produced as satisfactory decorative results as the carved wooden ones of the preceding age; the latter matched the other woodwork of the room, whereas the marble, and especially the statuary white variety, tended to attract attention to the detriment of every other ornament in the same apartment. Although less ornate than many, the mantelpiece (dating from the middle of the century) shown on page 64 is a fine specimen of the carved wood type; the room in which it is erected is hung with an eighteenth century wall-paper, and the result is entirely satisfactory. Figured silks, often designed expressly for the client (frequently obtained from France), began to take the place of velvets and damask for wall coverings in important apartments; and such hangings were usually surrounded by borders of carved wood gilt.

In 1756, Mrs Delany, referring to Lady Hillsborough's town house, writes: "She has a very good house furnished all with yellow damask with an open border of burnished silver that edges all the hangings, and many other pretty decorations of Japan and China, but no pictures."

A charming chimney-piece of the "continued" type is given on page 66; its strictly classic lines show the work of the architect, but, in order to suit the new mode, the details are finer and the construction lighter than customary during the early part of the century. An interesting comparison to this is the one (page 76) in the "Chinese" taste, also in the same collection; it illustrates the "petty wildnesses" of the ingenious furniture designer, and was evidently intended to be used in a room completely decorated in the same style. These quaint "Chinese," sometimes termed "Indian," rooms still exist in several great country-houses; the walls being hung with paper on which English interpretations of celestial art are most curiously depicted.

Mirrors are other articles which the furniture designers of the period adopted as their own, and, as they formed such important decorative objects in grand apartments, several are here illustrated. Such a fine specimen as that shown on page 59 (which is ten feet high) is extremely rare; it was evidently designed especially for the house from which it was removed. On page 62 another

MIRROR (10 ft. high) IN CARVED WOOD GILT

HANGING CUPBOARD; MAHOGANY, THE CARVINGS GILT

HANGING CHINA CABINET; "CHINESE TASTE," IN CARVED WOOD GILT

COMMODE TABLE, CIRCA 1760, CARVED IN MAHOGANY

CORNICE FOR WINDOW, CIRCA 1760, IN CARVED WOOD GILT

PIER-GLASS (8 ft high), IN CARVED WOOD GILT, CIRCA 1760

GIRANDOLE, IN CARVED WOOD GILT, CIRCA 1760

PIER-GLASS IN CARVED WOOD GILT, CIRCA 1765

SIDE-TABLE WITH MARBLE TOP IN CARVED WOOD GILT, CIRCA 1760

HANGING CHINA CABINET, WITH PAGODA TOP, CIRCA 1770

"SIMPLE" MANTELPIECE IN CARVED WOOD, CIRCA 1760

WRITING TABLE, CARVED IN MAHOGANY, CIRCA 1760

MANTELPIECE, CLASSIC DESIGN, CIRCA 1770

another is shown which is equally charming and which is nearly eight feet in height. Very large mirrors such as these occupied central positions in large rooms and underneath them stood either elaborate side-tables, frequently with marble tops, such as on page 63, or finely carved commode tables as illustrated on page 61. Another mirror, equally important, is shown on page 69; it represents the best style of Robert Adam and shows how his earlier work was influenced by the styles of his immediate predecessors. On page 72 is seen another interesting design, but of later date, probably about 1780. The example on page 63 is of about the same size; it is one of a pair intended to complete the decoration of the side of a room in which either a door, a chimney-piece, a large book-case or other important piece of furniture occupied the central position. The amount of detail of carving on these mirrors is extraordinary, and the price originally paid for them, partly on account of the then large cost of glass, would shock even those who are conversant with the figures recently obtained for "Chippendale" furniture.

The methods by which the designers of this period transformed the various articles of stately furniture to suit the modern taste are extremely interesting; in none are the successive developments more clearly marked than in the state bedsteads. Curtains at the four corners were considered a necessity till the end of the eighteenth century, if not for use at all events for appearance. On the example shown on page 54, the escalloped and nulled pattern is still used in the cornice, as had existed in Stuart times, but, instead of being upholstered, the carved mahogany is now left bare and the plumes at the corners are replaced by fanciful scrolls. The hangings are also simpler and the fringes and braiding less elaborate. In other words, the furniture maker was gradually supplanting the upholsterer.

In another state bedstead in the same collection the cornice is still more fanciful and shows no trace of any earlier influence, and the back of the bed is of polished wood instead of upholstery; instead of velvet or damask thin Indian silk is used for the hangings.

Other interesting varieties are the small "Tent" and "Field" beds made during this period; examples of these are scarce, yet, considering how often references are made to them, considerable numbers must have existed.

With increasing correspondence, writing-tables received more attention, and, as in France, large sums of money were spent by the wealthy in obtaining such articles of furniture sufficiently important to occupy the central

position

position in fine apartments. It would be difficult to conceive how luxury could be carried farther than the elaborate writing-table illustrated on page 64.

Other types of tables in use at this time are so numerous that it is impossible even to refer to each, but the specimen illustrated on page 63 will serve as an example of the finest work of the early part of the reign of George III. On page 71 is an illustration of one of a beautiful pair of side-tables; the peculiar form of "apron" with which these are ornamented is often referred to as denoting what is termed "Irish Chippendale," and such description also generally implies coarser work than was usual in England. Certainly in this case such a description would be misleading, as there is no finer carving in the collection than on these original examples.

It is often assumed that all so-called Chippendale furniture must be of mahogany left in its natural colour; however, many pieces intended for use in apartments such as drawing-rooms and boudoirs were gilt all over, as in France during the same period. The elaborate hanging china cabinet in the "Chinese taste" shown on page 61 is an instance. The exquisite China table, page 71, is also so ornamented, and, certainly among examples of the French school, it would be difficult to find more charming or more decorative articles of furniture. Such tables were used for displaying articles of china, the fashion for collecting which was again the vogue. The diaries of the period make constant references to the collections of china and the interest of the owners in such possessions. To some extent the fashion for Oriental specimens had now changed in favour of Dresden ware, and, in addition, examples from the pottery works at Chelsea, Bow, Rockingham, Worcester, Derby and Leeds (all of which commenced about the middle of the century) were much prized.

On pages 61 and 64 are shown hanging cabinets intended for containing such collections. On page 73 is an illustration of another type of china cabinet, which in various styles was now frequently made. The stand, also for displaying china, reproduced on the same page, is one of the decorative eccentricities in the so-called Chinese taste on which the fashionable furniture designer of the period displayed so much originality; the peculiar winged dragon with which it is surmounted was a great favourite with these artists, its prototype being frequently found on mirrors, beds and other elaborate objects. The small table (page 78) is interesting as the design is included in the work published by Chippendale, and is designated by him as a "Breakfast Table," although the exact reason for such definition is not apparent.

SETTEE AND MIRROR, IN CARVED WOOD GILT, SHOWING EARLIER STYLE OF ROBERT ADAM

PEDIMENTS OF BOOKCASES

BUREAU BOOKCASE, IN CARVED MAHOGANY, CIRCA 1770

SIDE-TABLE, WITH CARVED APRON, MAHOGANY

CHINA TABLE, WITH FRETWORK GALLERY, CIRCA 1770

PIER-GLASS IN CARVED WOOD & GILT, CIRCA 1780

SETTEE IN "CHINESE TASTE," CIRCA 1760

DRESSING-MIRROR, CIRCA 1780
CHINA CABINET WITH PAGODA ON PEDIMENT
STAND FOR DISPLAYING CHINA IN "CHINESE TASTE"

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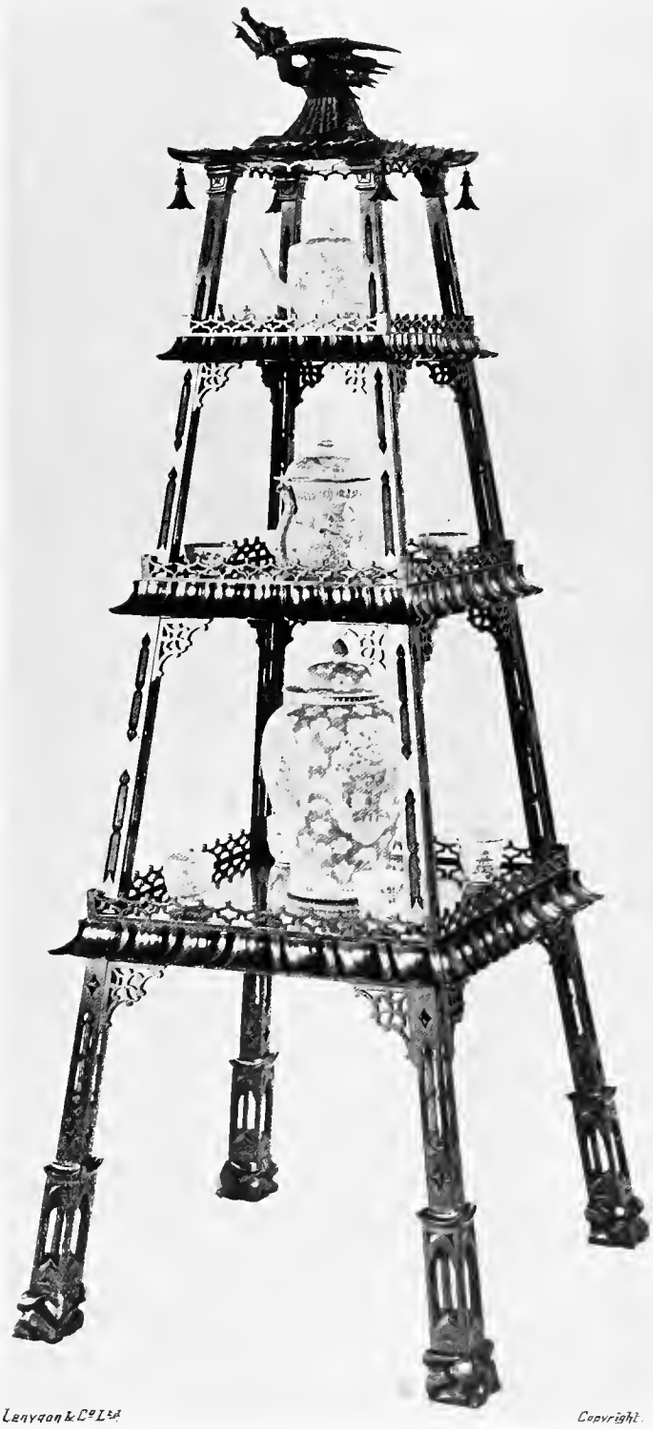

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MANTELPIECE, IN "CHINESE TASTE," CIRCA 1770

ARM-CHAIR, IN "CHINESE TASTE"

ARM-CHAIR, BY THE BROTHERS ADAM, SHOWING FRENCH INFLUENCE

ARM-CHAIR, IN "GOTHIC TASTE"

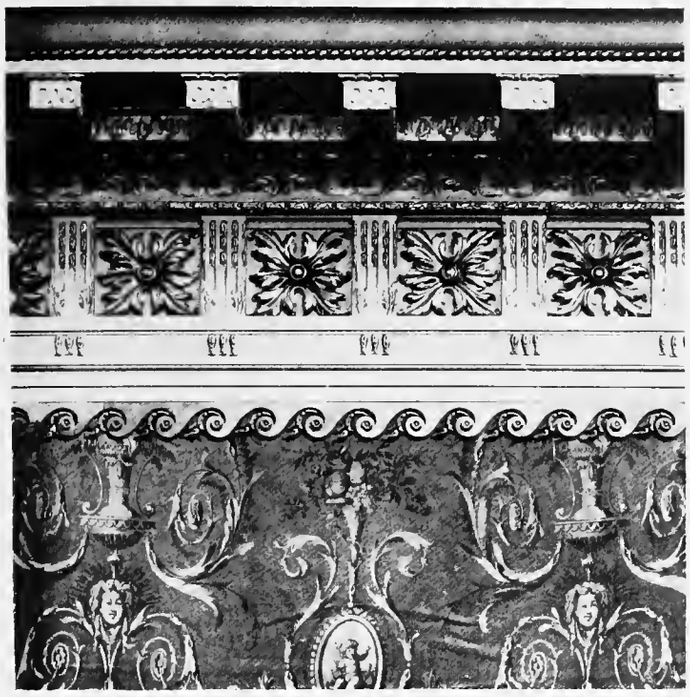
CHAIR, BY CHIPPENDALE

BREAKFAST TABLE BY CHIPPENDALE

WINDOW SETTEE, CIRCA 1780

ARM-CHAIR, EARLIER WORK OF THE BROTHERS ADAM

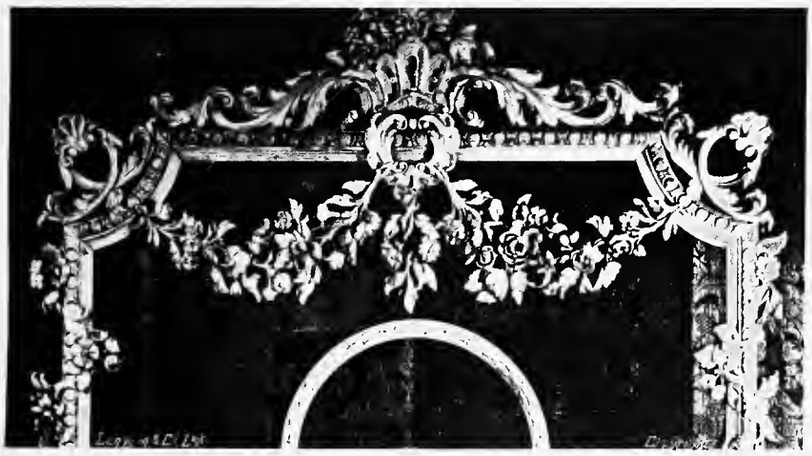
ARM-CHAIR, LATER WORK OF THE BROTHERS ADAM



PAINTED AND GILT CORNICE AND
FIGURED DAMASK WALL HANGING

GILT BORDERS FOR DAMASK HANGINGS

CARVED WOOD ORNAMENT
FOR APPLICATION ON
DAMASK HANGINGS



WALL DECORATION IN CARVED WOOD GILT, CIRCA 1780

PIERCED PICTURE FRAME, IN CARVED WOOD GILT

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WALL BRACKET, STYLE OF THE BROTHERS ADAM

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WALL BRACKET, STYLE OF CHIPPENDALE

The bureau book-case had for several generations been a popular article of English furniture, and large numbers in various styles still exist; the one shown on page 70 represents a good example of this useful article of furniture, as manufactured for wealthy clients at this period.

It remains to consider the subject of chairs and settees. The models here illustrated are chosen as typical of the different styles which were used in English mansions during the latter half of the eighteenth century. So much attention has lately been paid to these particular articles of furniture that to many it may be unnecessary to point out which represent the work at various stages during the careers of the brothers Adam, or that the settee on page 72 and the arm-chair on the top of page 77 are rare examples of so-called Chinese Chippendale, or that in the arm-chair at the bottom of the same page is seen a specimen of that greatest vagary of all, namely, the eighteenth century Gothic style, which Horace Walpole did much to popularize by his villa at Strawberry Hill.

The chair also shown on page 77 is peculiarly typical of the class of work associated with the name of Chippendale. The charming little settee on the next page, of about 1780, closes the list of examples chosen to illustrate the style of seats manufactured during the latter part of the eighteenth century.

On page 73 is seen an unusually fine specimen of a dressing-mirror, the design for which also dates from about 1780. But so numerous were the various types of furniture upon which the cabinet makers and the carvers of this period displayed their originality and abilities that to illustrate specimens of every type would be impossible. In addition to the articles already referred to, clocks, screens, wine-coolers, sideboards, urns, urn tables, ladies' work-tables, tea-caddies and barometers do not nearly complete the entire list; indeed, it would seem that a greater variety of furniture existed than is met with to-day.

The previous descriptions have nearly all related to what may be termed actual articles of furniture, but the mural decorations of the same school and period are equally interesting, although less generally understood. Tapestry and wood panelling were out of date: wall-paper, unless hand-painted in Chinese or other peculiar styles, was only considered fit for secondary apartments; Genoese and Venetian velvets were hardly suitable for use with the modern light furniture. Silk damask had become the fashionable wall hanging, and served as a good background for gilt decorative objects.

The mirrors of the period have already been referred to; brackets for

supporting

Latter Half of the XVIII Century

supporting busts or china ornaments had been largely used by the previous generation, but the shapes now changed entirely to suit the new modes; those illustrated on page 80 are typical of the finest work of the schools of Adam and Chippendale respectively. The unusual open scroll carving on the picture frame shown on the same page would, upon a background of rose or green silk, form a most decorative object and one which would harmonize well with the gilt mirrors and other ornamented carvings of the period. Not only the silk wall hangings, but even the wall-papers were usually bordered along the dado rail and cornice, as well as round the doors and windows, with carved and gilt scroll-work, four different patterns of which are seen at the top of page 79. For the further embellishment of the grandest apartments carved ornament was designed to occupy special positions, executed in the same openwork style and also highly gilt; two specimens are also given on the same page.

It is difficult to realize why the use of such applied carved ornament has not continued; nothing could be more suitable for completing decoration. To some extent it may be accounted for by the fact that, however well furniture in the style of Chippendale and his compeers is understood to-day, certainly the interior decoration of the same school and period, although possessing equal charm and originality, have not received the same study and interest.

CHAPTER VI. TAPESTRIES

ANY description of decoration of English mansions during the seventeenth century would be incomplete without reference to tapestries; but the space here available only permits of the briefest sketch of this important subject. Tapestries have been made at Mortlake and other places in England at various periods, but those of home manufacture can only form a very small fraction of the numbers in this country, by far the greater quantity having come from the Netherlands, for the manufacture of which England supplied the wool.

During the Middle Ages tapestries were considered movable, and were usually taken down and carried, together with the furniture, on journeys from one castle to another. From the frequent reference to the subject in State-papers, wills and other documents, the numbers of tapestries in England previous to the accession of Henry VIII must have been very large. That monarch, imitating the example of his contemporaries, was enthusiastic in collecting specimens, and the quantity he obtained can be judged from the inventory which was taken of his goods after his death. At the various royal palaces, such as the Tower, Westminster, Hampton Court, Oatlands, Nonesuch and Windsor, he possessed no less than 2,600 pieces.

Probably many of these were formerly Church property, the subjects being mostly religious; certainly a considerable number had belonged to Cardinal Wolsey, as the description, " Having a border of the late Cardinalls Armes," frequently occurs. A few were of Italian origin, the remainder being from the Netherlands.

Queen Elizabeth herself had little money to spare on such luxuries, but Lord Cecil and other of her nobles continued to import tapestries from Flanders. Mary Queen of Scots owned upwards of thirty in the Palace of Holyrood. References exist of about this date to tapestry weavers at Canterbury, Norwich and other towns, but, as in every case these were Flemish refugees, it is probable their occupation was repairing rather than manufacturing important pieces.

By the beginning of the seventeenth century the manufacture of tapestries was almost the only trade in the Netherlands which her former rulers had not succeeded in ruining; indeed, many Flemish cities, notwithstanding their former great reputations, discontinued the weaving industry, and Brussels became the principal centre of the trade. However, the Archduke Albert and his consort Isabella did their utmost to revive this, the national industry.

The fame

Tapestries

The fame of Rubens did much to assist, and his designs were extensively utilized. Although the output had declined it was still far greater than in any other country, and large numbers of tapestries were imported to England.

The history of weaving in the Netherlands during the seventeenth century shows a gradual but steady falling off, both in the quality of the work and the number of people employed. The examples illustrated on pages 85 and 87, which are both in the collection at N° 31 Old Burlington Street, may be taken as typical of Flemish work at the latter part of the sixteenth and at the earlier part of the following century respectively; in the border of the latter may be seen a shield with the letter B on each side, one of the marks of the Brussels weavers.

At the end of the eighteenth century the trade, which had been the glory of Flanders and which had once employed many thousands of operatives, only found work for one hundred and fifty craftsmen.

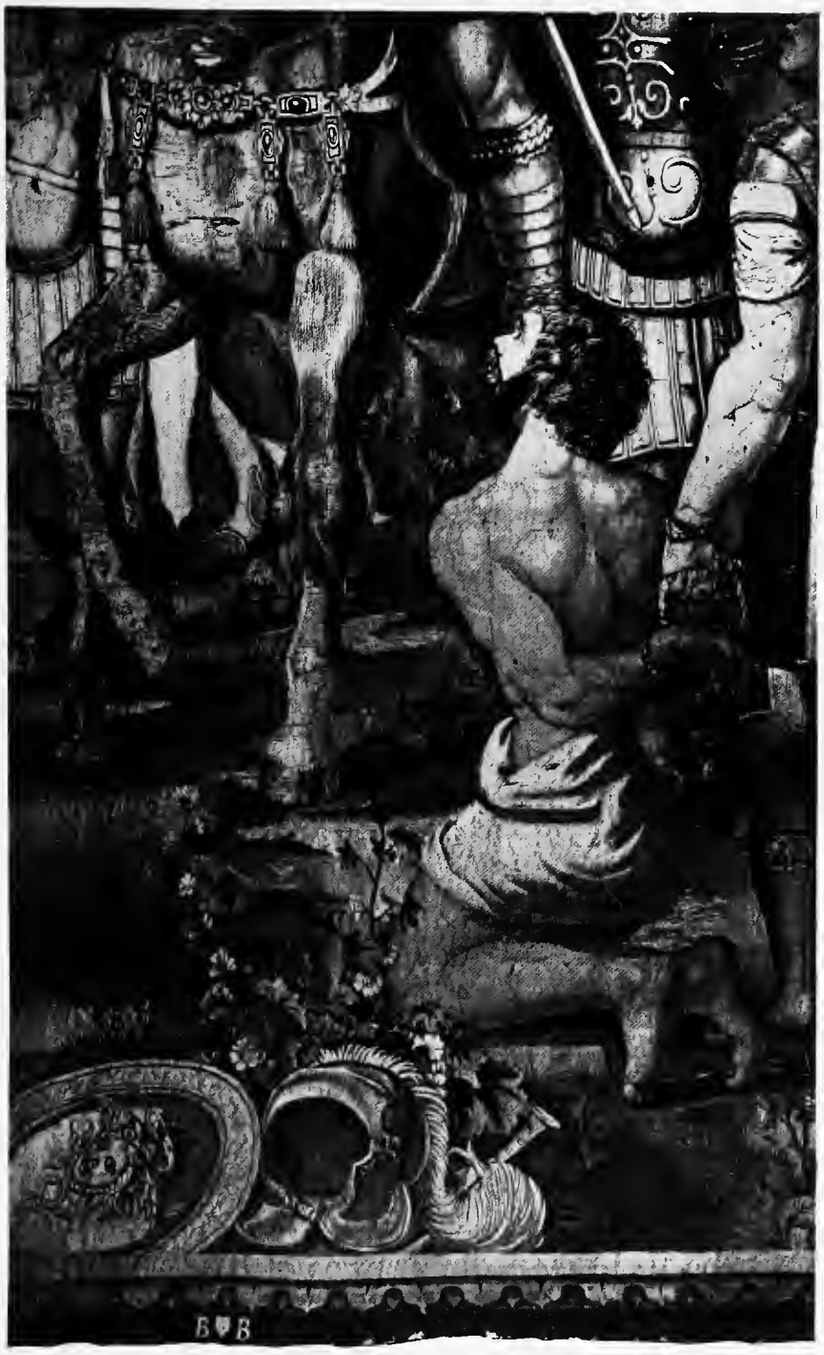
In 1607 Henry IV started a royal manufactory in Paris; at once this proved successful. Some ten years later King James I decided to imitate his example, the enterprise at Mortlake being the result. Sir Francis Crane was the leading spirit from the first; in return for erecting the necessary buildings and starting the enterprise, he was granted the fees for the making of four baronets and a monopoly of production in this country for twenty-four years. About fifty weavers were secretly obtained from the Netherlands, and Philip de Maecht, who had assisted in starting the royal works in Paris, was appointed manager of the works. Acting under the advice of Rubens, the Raphael cartoons, which Pope Leo X had sent to Brussels to be translated into the tapestries now at the Vatican, were acquired in 1630 for use at Mortlake; for upwards of two hundred years these cartoons were at Hampton Court Palace, but they are now at South Kensington Museum.

Through the services of Sir Henry Wootton, Francis Cleyn came to England about 1623 as principal designer, and continued in this capacity for about thirty years; his abilities did much to promote the success of the enterprise. He also decorated several mansions, notably Bolsover and Holland House, with paintings.

Sir Francis Crane received plenty of royal orders, but experienced much difficulty about payment; in 1623 he writes to the King: "I am already over £16,000 in the busynes and never made returns of more than £2,500, so that my estate is wholly exhausted and my credit is spent, besides the debts that lye upon me." Under Charles I he was more fortunate, not only

in obtaining

SIXTEENTH CENTURY FLEMISH TAPESTRY IN THE EARLY RENAISSANCE ROOM AT
31 OLD BURLINGTON STREET



BRUSSELS TAPESTRY, EARLY SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

MORTLAKE TAPESTRY "THE STORY OF VULCAN AND VENUS" IN THE VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM

MORTLAKE TAPESTRY "INDIAN SCENES," IN THE VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM

in obtaining payments and grants, but in receiving even more liberal patronage; indeed, it was from the accession of Charles I until the death of Sir Francis in 1636 that the prosperity of the Mortlake factory was at its height. Its success created considerable envy, and petitions were presented by persons anxious to obtain favour representing that the profits made were unreasonably large.

During the troublous times of the monarchy naturally the factory at Mortlake, which had become a Crown property, suffered considerably. As no customers could be found in England, further petitions sought for the repeal of the duty against exportation, in order that the productions might be sold in Holland, the Mortlake workmen alleging they were starving with hunger.

One of the principal subjects woven at Mortlake was the series illustrating the history of Vulcan and Venus; amongst other allegations contained in the "discovery," which Dru Burton presented in 1630 to the King, he explained how the Crown had been greatly overcharged by Sir Francis Crane, and asserted that a profit of £12,225 had been made on four copies of this particular tapestry, the original having been ordered by the King. The Victoria and Albert Museum at South Kensington contains one of the series, an illustration of which is here given. The petition, which contains much interesting information, commences: "A discoverie of the great gaine made by the manufacture of the Tapistrie. It may please your Ma^ie. The first suits of tapistrie of the storie of Vulcan and Venus, which is the foundation of all the good Tapistries made in England."

The Commonwealth is not usually credited with doing much to assist the fine arts, but the Mortlake factory is an instance to the contrary, as during that period it received considerable encouragement from the authorities. The Council of State ordered the tapestries representing the destruction of the Armada to be hung up in their Chamber, and Oliver Cromwell himself gave many instructions about various other pieces from the royal collections being arranged for his own requirements. The Roundhead soldiers, however, regarded the subjects as idolatrous, and numerous tapestries in country mansions were mutilated.

It is also somewhat curious that the profusion of household luxury during the reign of Charles II was not accompanied by a revival of interest in the manufactory at Mortlake; on the contrary, the opposite was the case. It can partly be accounted for by the fact that a reaction had set in against the architecture and decoration of the early Renaissance period, and every-

thing that

thing that savoured of the old Flemish taste was out of fashion, and also that panelling in oak or cedar in the style of Wren had become popular for covering walls.

For those who still preferred tapestry, the royal factory in Paris supplied more modern and brighter examples, the principal novelty being that such French work more closely represented paintings. Evelyn, in 1683, referring to his visit to the dressing-room of the Duchess of Portsmouth, writes: "Here I see the new fabriq of French tapissry, for designe, tendernesse of worke and incomparable imitation of the best paintings, beyond anything I had ever beheld. Some pieces at Versailles, St Germains and other Palaces of the French King, with hunting figures and landskips, exotiq fowls and all to the life really don."

The demand for tapestries must have still been considerable as, in a petition which Francis Poyntz presented in 1678, it was stated that £100,000 worth of tapestry was imported into England every year, employing 10,000 people in its manufacture abroad, and taking £100,000 out of this country. England having plenty of wool, and the best in the world for the purpose, might with encouragement become the best magazine in the world for tapestry.

During the reign of Charles II repeated alterations were made in the management of the Mortlake factory, but none seem to have been successful, although the rent of the building was reduced to five shillings per annum, and £1,000 per annum offered towards the support of the works. The French style was imitated and Verrio supplied designs, but the brilliancy of the Paris colours was never obtained. Sir Sackville Crow, one of the many who endeavoured to manage the business, was soon in the debtors' prison; he alleged that the King gave the trade little or no encouragement. From its inception until it was closed, the employees at Mortlake seem to have been entirely Flemings, and their religion was one of the many difficulties during the reign of James II. William III did little to assist, as the tapestries which were ordered in commemoration of his victories were obtained from Brussels.

There is little further to relate in the history of the Mortlake factory; various attempts were made to foster the trade, but evidently its reputation had disappeared. In 1702 the surveyors stated: "The commodity did not vend as formerly so there had been but little work of late years," and, in 1702, the Crown was advised that, "It would not be to the Queen's prejudice or

that of

that of her people if Her Majesty released to the petitioner the proviso and conditions for employing the houses for tapestry making, and that Her Majesty might lawfully release the same."

Notwithstanding the decline of the factory at Mortlake, there was some revival in the demand for tapestries of other makes at the latter part of the seventeenth and at the beginning of the eighteenth centuries, and separate factories were commenced in various parts of England. The one at Lambeth attained some proportions; another instance was at Stamford, where are reputed to have been made the set representing air, fire and water, now at Burley-on-the-Hill; others of the same make are at Belton House. One of the last known manufacturers in this country was Vanderbanc, who worked in Soho early in the eighteenth century. His productions are interesting as somewhat resembling those of the Gobelins. The other illustration which accompanies this article is of a tapestry probably by this maker at the Victoria and Albert Museum. Another factory, where imitations of Gobelins work were produced, was started by Parisot in 1750 at Paddington; it was soon afterwards removed to Fulham, but ended some five years later.

Although closed for lack of funds at the end of the seventeenth century, the Paris factory of the Gobelins was soon after revived, and the work there has practically represented the industry of tapestry weaving from the early part of the eighteenth century until quite recent times. The subjects chosen have altered periodically with the many varieties of taste adopted in that country. French tapestries, intended both for the decoration of walls and for the covering of furniture, are occasionally found in English houses, principally imported during the latter half of the eighteenth century.

CHAPTER VII. WOOD PANELLING

WAINSCOATING, or, as it is also spelt, wainscoting, was certainly the most usual form of wall decoration during the whole of the seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth century, but before commencing to deal with these periods, the work of somewhat earlier times must be referred to in order to follow the course of its development. At the beginning of the reign of Henry VIII, Gothic traditions in England had only commenced to be affected by the revival of classic knowledge already dominant in Italy; moreover, the wealth in this country was then so largely in the hands of the Church, and art was so entirely devoted to her service, that no decoration existed especially suitable for castles and manor-houses, or which varied from that employed in monasteries, abbeys and churches.

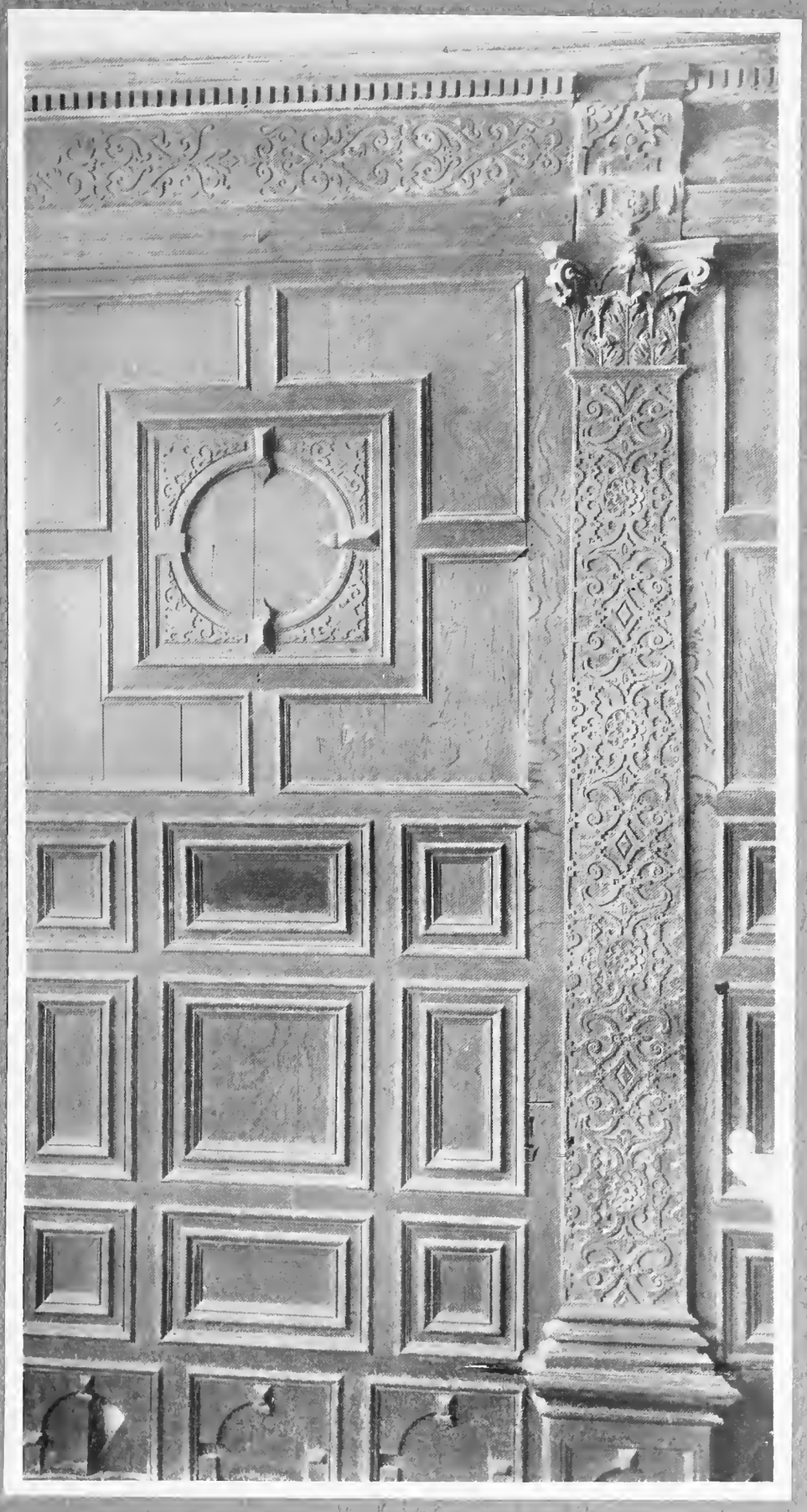
Early in the sixteenth century the panels of wainscoting were frequently ornamented with grotesque figures and faces, but the most usual design was the linen-fold pattern; indeed this had served for upwards of a century throughout northern Europe to ornament chests, cupboards and beds, as well as walls: typical specimens are shown at the top of page 97.

With the distribution of Church property, many of the old buildings were destroyed, but the wainscoting which they contained was often preserved for new edifices; indeed, this practice of removing wainscoting from an old house to a new, whether or not built on the old site, continued to prevail until well into the eighteenth century. Instances are to be found at Coleshill, Badminton, Ditchley and numerous other mansions.

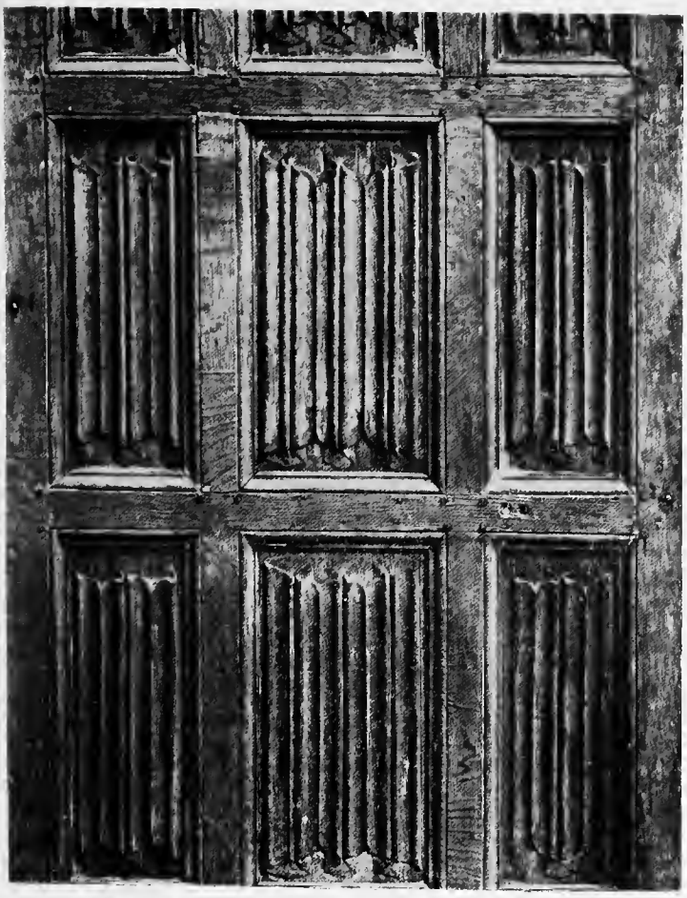
By the accession of Elizabeth, the linen-fold pattern had almost disappeared, and during her reign panels were generally left plain, as in the example shown. This specimen may date from her time, but exactly similar work continued to be made as late as the restoration of Charles II. Such plain panels were occasionally inlaid with geometrical and other designs, the inlay consisting usually of boxwood or ebony let into grooves cut in the solid panel and not merely inserted in a veneer as at later periods.

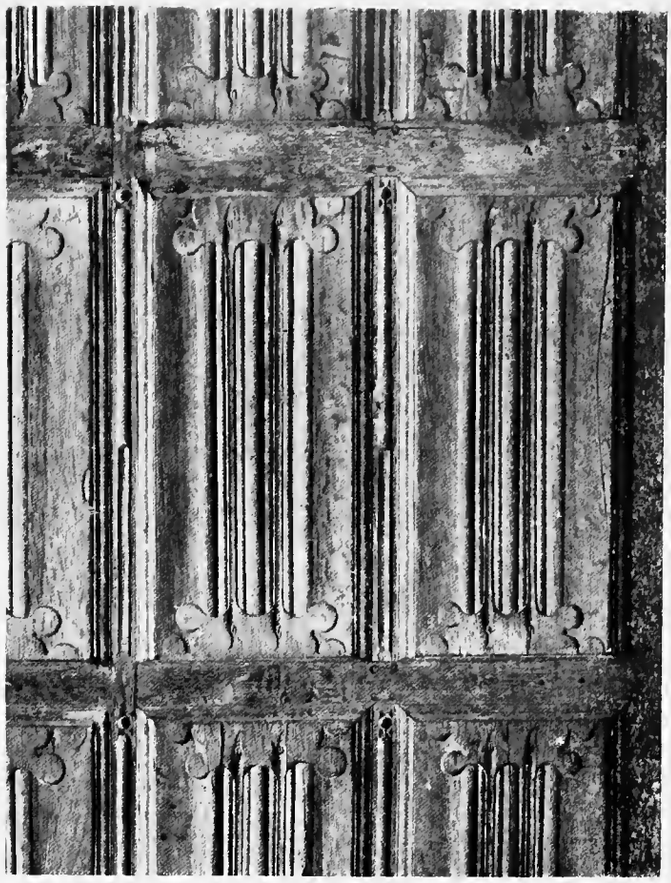
Before the close of the sixteenth century, considerable knowledge of classic art existed in the Netherlands, and in all designs then produced in that country, for whatever purpose they were intended, is to be seen a quaint intermingling of the old and the new styles. Nothing marks the arrival of the Flemings in this country at the end of the reign of Queen Elizabeth more clearly than the carvings which they executed on wainscoting; an occupation which must have

employed

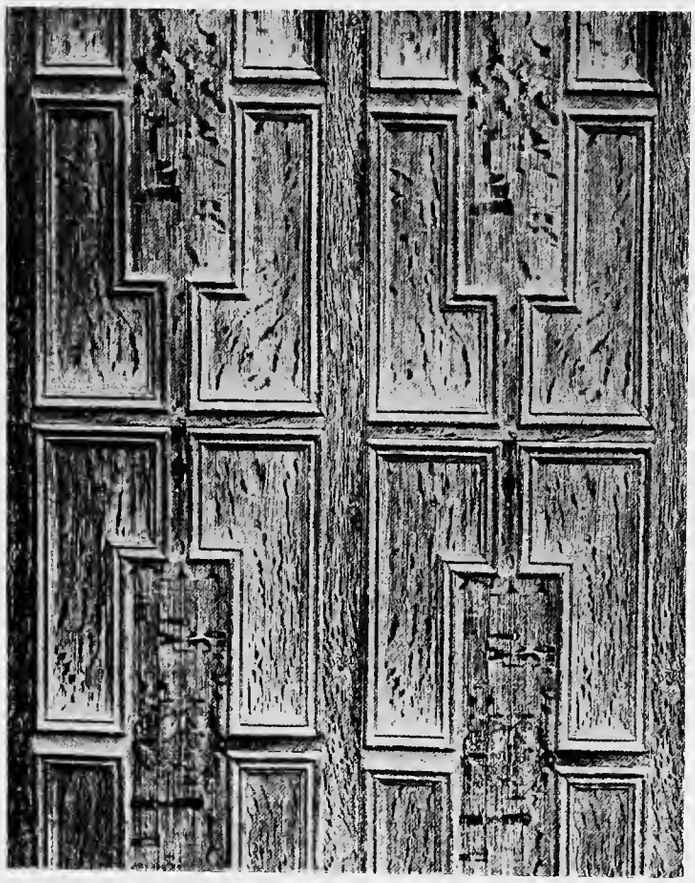


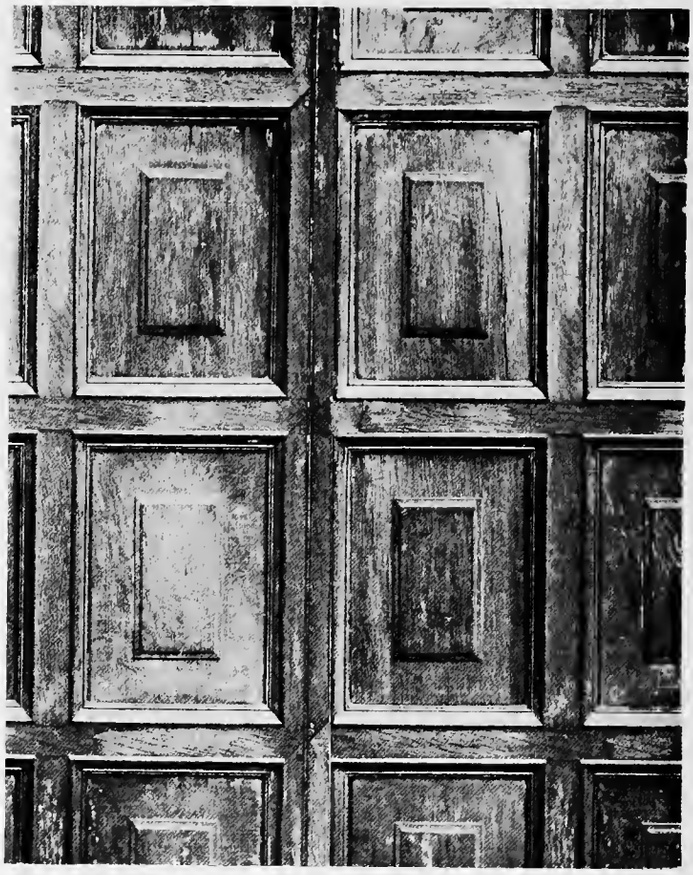
WOOD PANELLING WITH CLASSIC PILASTER, CIRCA 1620

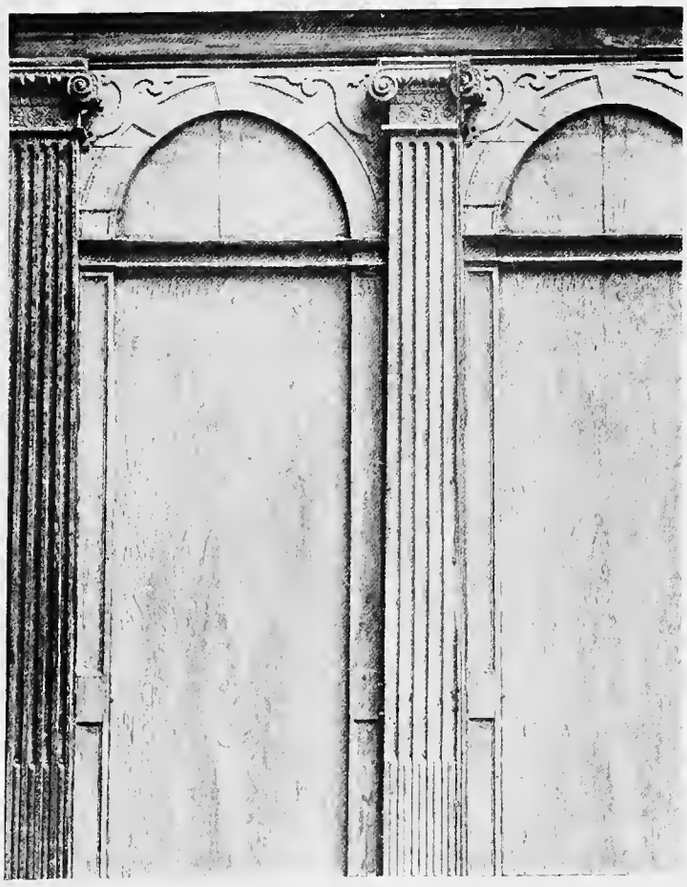


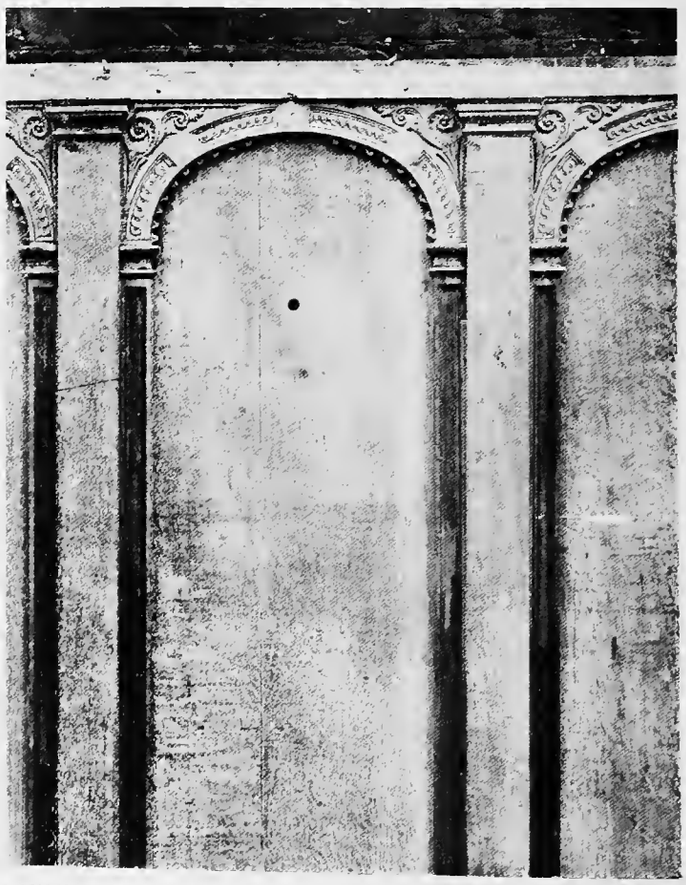


OAK PANELLING, END OF SIXTEENTH CENTURY

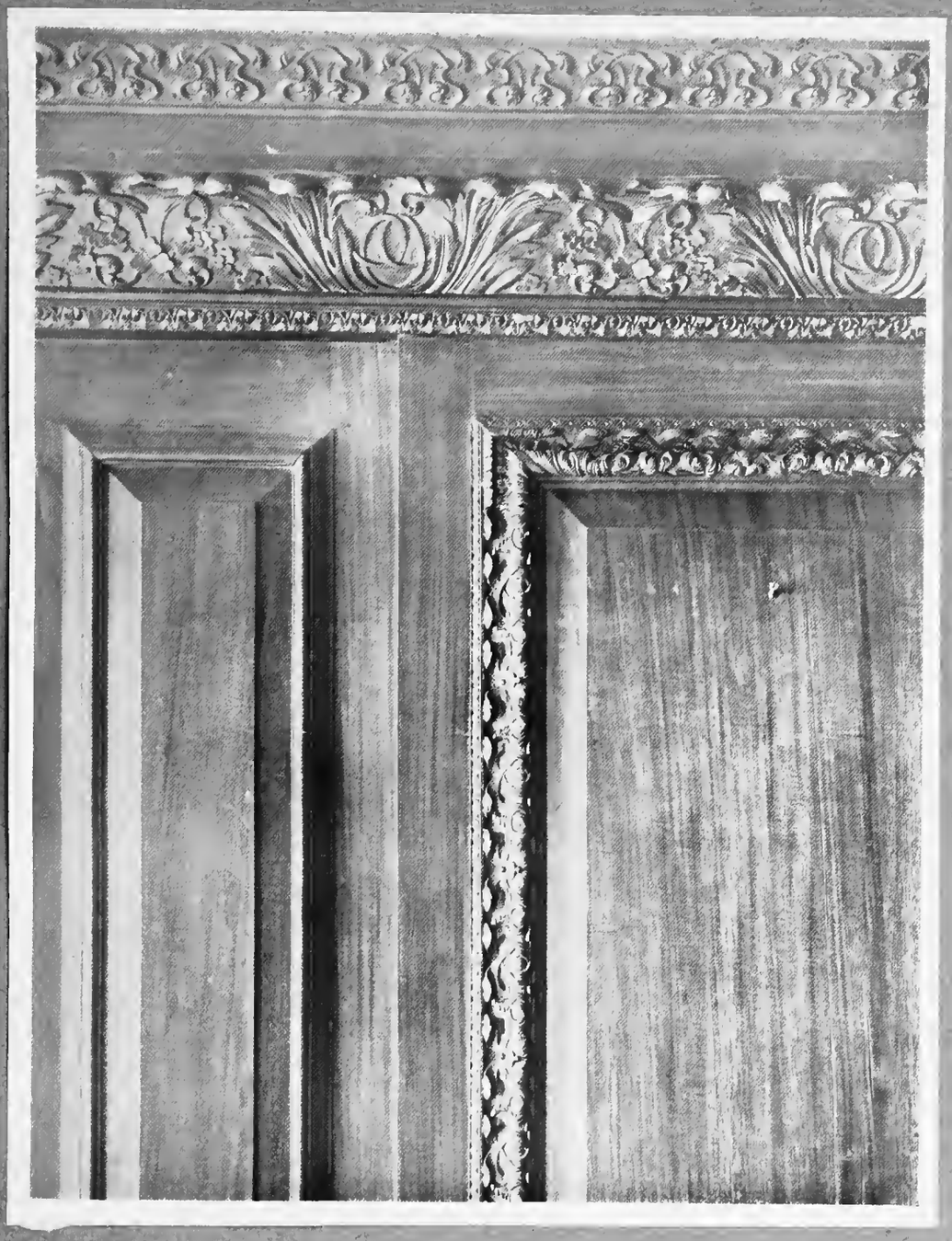






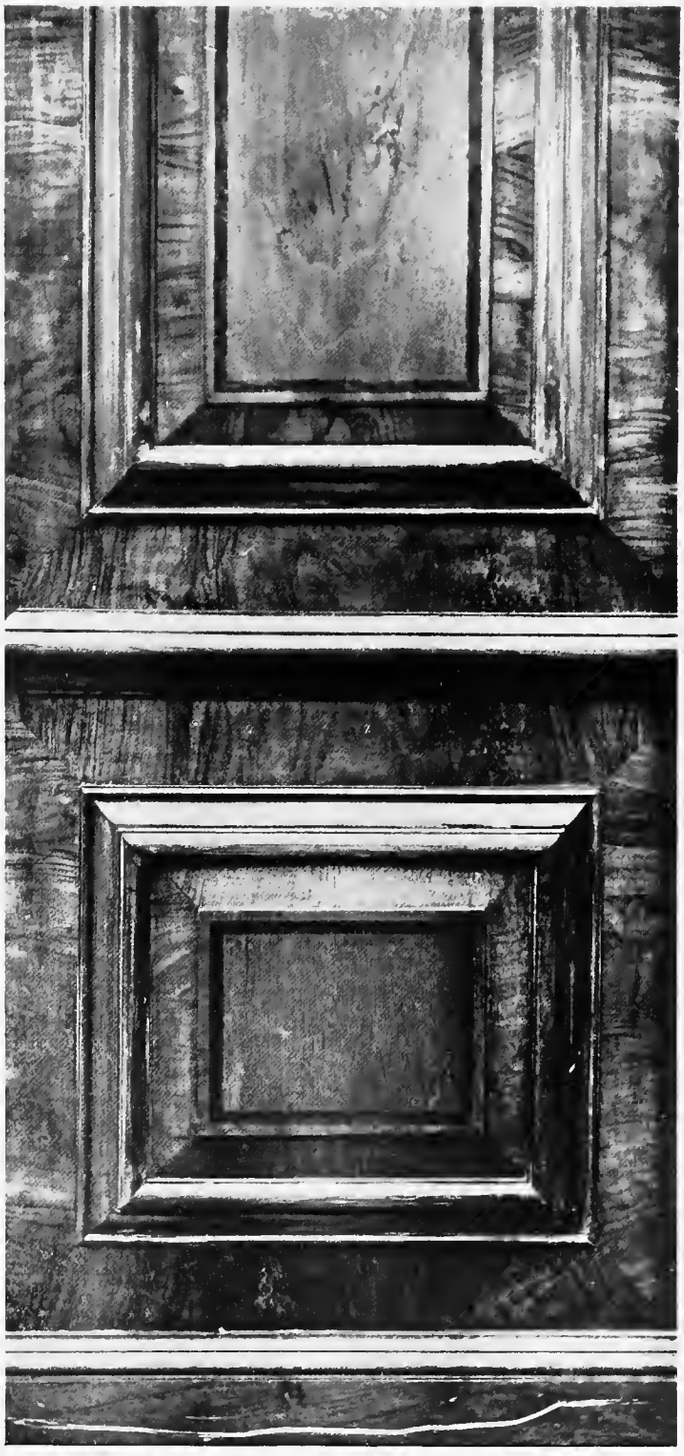


OAK PANELLING, EARLY PART OF SEVENTEENTH CENTURY



DETAIL OF CORNICE AND PANELLING IN CEDAR ROOM

OAK PANELLING, CIRCA 1680



WALNUT PANELLING, CROSS-BANDED AND INLAID, CIRCA 1690

WOOD PANELLING AND CARVED CORNICE AND OVERDOOR, CIRCA 1730

employed a considerable number of these refugees. Their immigration continued through the reign of James I and during the earlier part of that of his successor; and in all the numerous mansions then erected, the influence, if not the actual handicraft, of these Flemings is to be traced. Although all their work bears a strong family likeness, the actual details vary considerably, the designs in no two cases being identically the same. The specimens shown on page 98 (like the other examples which illustrate this article) are in the collection at N° 31 Old Burlington Street, and may be taken as typical of the best work of this interesting period.

The fact should be mentioned, especially as it is one which is, perhaps, hardly realized, that much of this early Renaissance wainscoting was not left in the bare oak with which it was generally constructed, but was originally painted and often highly decorated; but as distemper was the medium generally employed, such painting has in most cases entirely disappeared.

About the middle of the seventeenth century, a complete change began to take place both in the designs and the construction of the panelling used in English houses. This consisted of a substitution of classic for semi-classic art, and marks the final disappearance of Flemish influence; but, before dealing with the new style, it is interesting to note the characteristics of the principal differences.

In the earlier Renaissance work the panels were sunk and the framework projecting, whereas in the later style the opposite system was adopted. In the former period, classic knowledge was only displayed by the occasional use of columns, by no means correct in their proportions, or by the adoption of rounded arches with classical enrichments. Possibly small round arches springing from the floor, such as are sometimes met with, and such as may be seen on page 95, were suggested by the arches which often form the ground floor of classic buildings.

Another innovation was the abolition of small cross sections and the substitution of long narrow top panels of various widths, and accurately spaced to balance each other and to avoid monotony. In the earlier work (except in some of the latest or what may be termed transition examples, such as that shown on page 98) the ornament was of uniform size, repeating itself until the required space was covered.

Inigo Jones had already produced in this country buildings true in every detail to the principles of classic art, and it was on a correct knowledge of

such art

such art that the new style of wainscoting was founded, the skirting board (still used in every modern room) being copied from the plinth and base of the classical pedestal, the dado being the die of such pedestal, and the dado moulding the cap; the upper panel takes the place of the shaft of the column, and the frieze and cornice represent the parts similarly delineated. The rules of the Roman Vitruvius as well as of Palladio and other great architects of the Renaissance had already been published; these works were devoted to the minutest analysis of the five orders of architecture, and translations, which were now beginning to appear in England, enabled Webb, Marsh, Gerbier, and other successors of Inigo Jones to produce not only external but internal architecture approximately correct to the principles of classic art. In Holland the same results had been obtained at a slightly earlier date, and, as the Dutch had become the recognized authorities, no doubt their influence did much to bring about the complete change in internal decoration in England.

As previously mentioned, the panels on the wainscoting were now raised and a particular form of bolection moulding was employed, the introduction of which is often attributed to Wren, whose work commenced immediately after the Restoration, but earlier examples exist. However, he appears to have increased the size of these bolection mouldings, and with the aid of Grinling Gibbons he instituted further elaboration, not only by carving such mouldings, but also by applying additional ornamentation in the shapes of wreaths and drops, a subject which in this book is dealt with separately.

The use of wood for wainscoting is practically peculiar to northern Europe, and is there adopted as keeping out the cold more successfully than stone or plaster, while south of the Alps its use is avoided for the equally good reason that in hot climates it attracts vermin.

The earliest examples of this classic style of panelling in wood were painted white, probably to more closely resemble the stone and plaster work in the villas and palaces of Italy.

From the accession of Charles II it became the fashion to leave the wood bare, or merely waxed over; Evelyn, describing the gallery at Euston, writes: "The wainscot being of Firr and painted, does not please me well as Spanish Oake without Paint." This fashion continued from that date until the end of the reign of Queen Anne, and, considering the numerous mansions then erected, naturally many examples still remain; the rooms at Hampton Court and Kensington Palace are well-known instances. The oak panelling in the

room now at N° 31 Old Burlington Street, removed from Brick Court, Temple, a portion of which is illustrated on page 100, is another example.

Oak was the wood usually employed, but cedar was also largely used. The accompanying illustrations (page 99), from the Cedar Room in the same collection, show the elaborate carving of the mouldings surrounding the principal panels, and also the carved cornice, one of the many small variations from classic rules which Wren adopted, and of which his strict Palladian successors so much disapproved. Another wood which served the same purpose, but not so frequently either as oak or cedar, was walnut, often cross-banded and inlaid with other woods as on much contemporary furniture. The following description by Celia Fiennes of the hall in Lord Orford's house would apply equally to the example which is given on page 101: "It is wanscoated wth wall nut tree the pannells and Rims round wth mulbery tree, yt is a Lemon Coullour and ye moldings bayond it round are of a sweete outlandish wood not much differing from Cedar but a finer Graine, the Chaires are of the same."

Early in the eighteenth century, stucco or plaster commenced to compete with wood for the panelling of English rooms; it was largely employed by Vanbrugh and other members of the new school of Palladian architects, as representing more closely the examples in Italy, which, without great knowledge, they were endeavouring to imitate. The main anxiety at that particular period seemed to aim at producing stupendous results, and the detail often showed a coarseness unsuitable for interior decoration. By the accession of George II "architecture resumed all her rights," and buildings were designed (to quote Walpole) "in the purest style of antique composition," and the pattern of wainscoting then employed again marks a distinct change. Instead of the panels being applied on the face of the framing, they were once more recessed, but the principal difference arose from the care and skill which was then bestowed on the arrangement and detail of this interior woodwork. It would be impossible to illustrate a better example than that from the Stateroom at N° 31 Old Burlington Street, shown on page 102; here the narrow panels are only slightly recessed, while the more important or central panels project and are surrounded by deep mouldings carved with classic detail. The architraves, overdoors, mantels and all other parts were also designed so as to form integral parts of the complete scheme of decoration. The result of the skill and care thus bestowed produces an

appearance

Wood Panelling

appearance of dignity which in no other period or in any other country has been surpassed.

The use of unpainted wood was now abandoned, and the prevailing shades of cream, green and pale blue colours which were used gave the appearance of comfort for which the rooms of this period are noted. Frequently additional grandeur was obtained by gilding or partly gilding some of the carving. Until the middle of the eighteenth century, the design and arrangement of this wainscoting had been in the hands of the architect, but from that time his services began to be replaced by the designer of furniture. Panelling disappeared, and in its place the walls were covered with silk or more often with wall-paper; from the decorative point of view there can be no comparison between the flat meanderings of one repeated pattern and the strong architectural lines produced by any scheme of panelling, however simple.

PLASTER DECORATION, UPPER PART OF HALL AT 30 OLD BURLINGTON STREET
DESIGNED BY WILLIAM KENT

CHAPTER VIII
PLASTER ORNAMENTATION

PLASTERING may claim to be the most ancient form of decoration, for the discoveries at Tel-el-Amarna reveal the art to have existed more than 1,000 years before even the well-known examples at Pompeii were produced. The trade of the plasterer is closely allied to that of the artist painter, fresco being a method of painting with water colours on freshly laid plaster, the colours incorporating and drying with it, which is the only means of obtaining durability. The art of fresco was revived by the great painters of the Renaissance, who worked exactly in this manner: compare the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican thus decorated by Michael Angelo.

Plaster has been known under numerous names, and many varieties have existed, differing according to the plastic mixtures. The different compositions and the methods of application are described in considerable detail by Vitruvius. The superior quality of the Italian plaster was certainly due to considerable quantities of very finely ground marble being introduced into the finishing coat, which enabled the work to be so highly polished that it was used as mirrors and tops of tables.

Numerous experiments for improving the quality of plaster are recorded: Pliny mentions fig juice; the Egyptians mixed mud from the Nile; elm bark was employed for Justinian's Church at Constantinople; bullock's blood was another ingredient. Such materials as beer, eggs, milk, gluten, sugar, pitch, and wax were used for mixing with mortar by builders of medieval cathedrals; indeed, beer was habitually employed, Bess of Hardwick's masons "having to melt it in the cold winter of her death."

Horsehair and fibre were in use in the sixteenth century. The account for repairs of the steeple of Newark Church in 1671 contains an entry: "Six strike of malt to make mortar to blend with ye lime and temper the same and 350 eggs to mix with it." The exterior of Lord Burlington's Palladian villa at Chiswick was plastered with stucco, and during its building the surrounding district was impoverished for eggs and buttermilk. Sir Christopher Wren preferred the old method of using "marble meal," that is, marble very finely ground.

The objects of these various ingredients were either to retard the setting, to allow more time for manipulation, or to increase the ultimate hardness.

The earliest examples in England seem to have been executed by the

Italian

Plaster Ornamentation

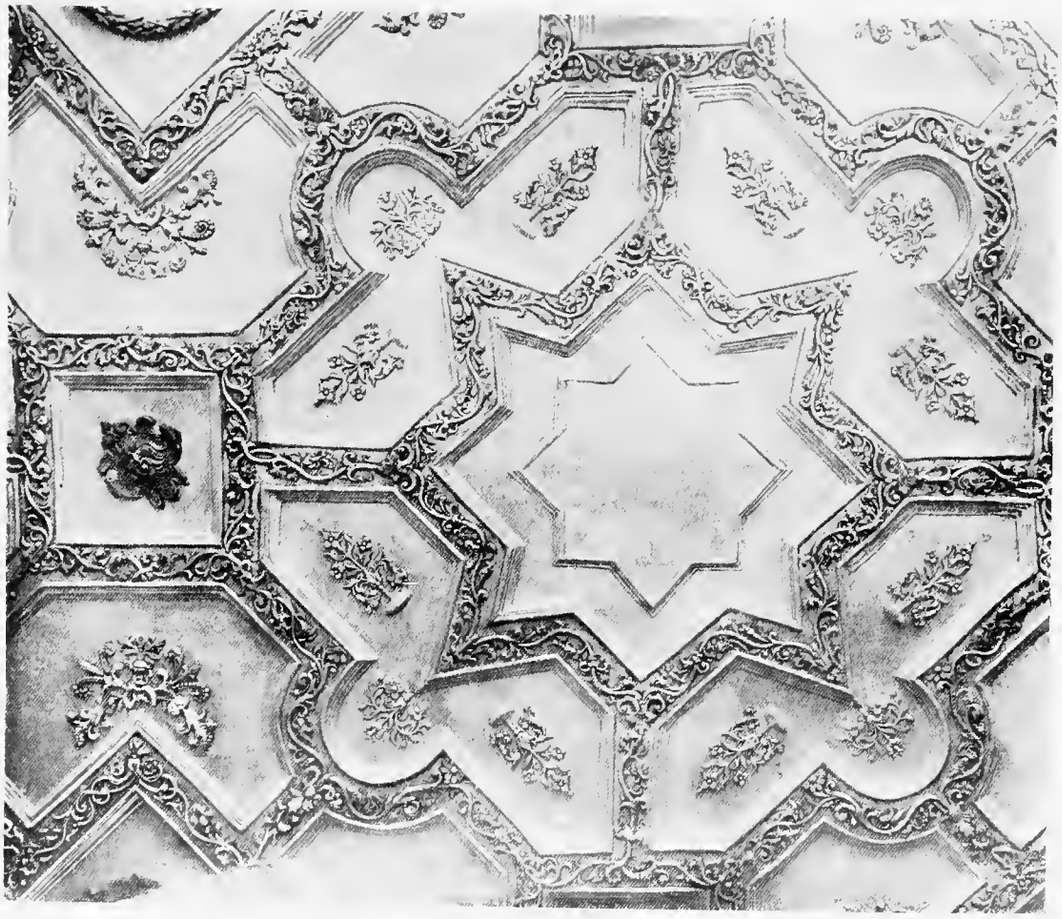
Italian workmen introduced by Henry VII, but probably the elaborate ornamentation both of the exterior and the interior of the Palace of Nonesuch during the next reign was the first revelation in this country of the wonderful possibilities of this homely material. With the religious troubles, the Italians returned to their homes, but, as plaster was henceforward continuously employed, it would seem that English workmen had not only learned the trade, but had realized its value as a decorative medium. Examples of outdoor work still exist in a good state of preservation (principally in the Eastern counties) dating from the fifteenth century, and of interior work, the enormous number of elaborate ceilings found in mansions erected during Elizabethan and early Jacobean periods show how universal its use had become and how thoroughly its application was understood.

The men who executed this early work were not merely craftsmen, they were artists employing plaster as their medium and modelling the material in situ; by no other process can the same freedom and beauty of workmanship be obtained; to-day it would be almost impossible to find workmen who, even if capable of modelling in situ, could design with the same feeling, the same delicacy and the same soft touch as their Elizabethan and Jacobean forbears. To avoid the metallic effect produced by modern mechanical repetition, it is necessary to cast from moulds made from original examples. By this means the usual sharpness is avoided, and even the irregularities of the groundwork and of the mouldings are reproduced, which, unintentional as they originally were, add largely to the interest. It is by this process that the early Renaissance examples shown on pages 111 and 112 were produced.

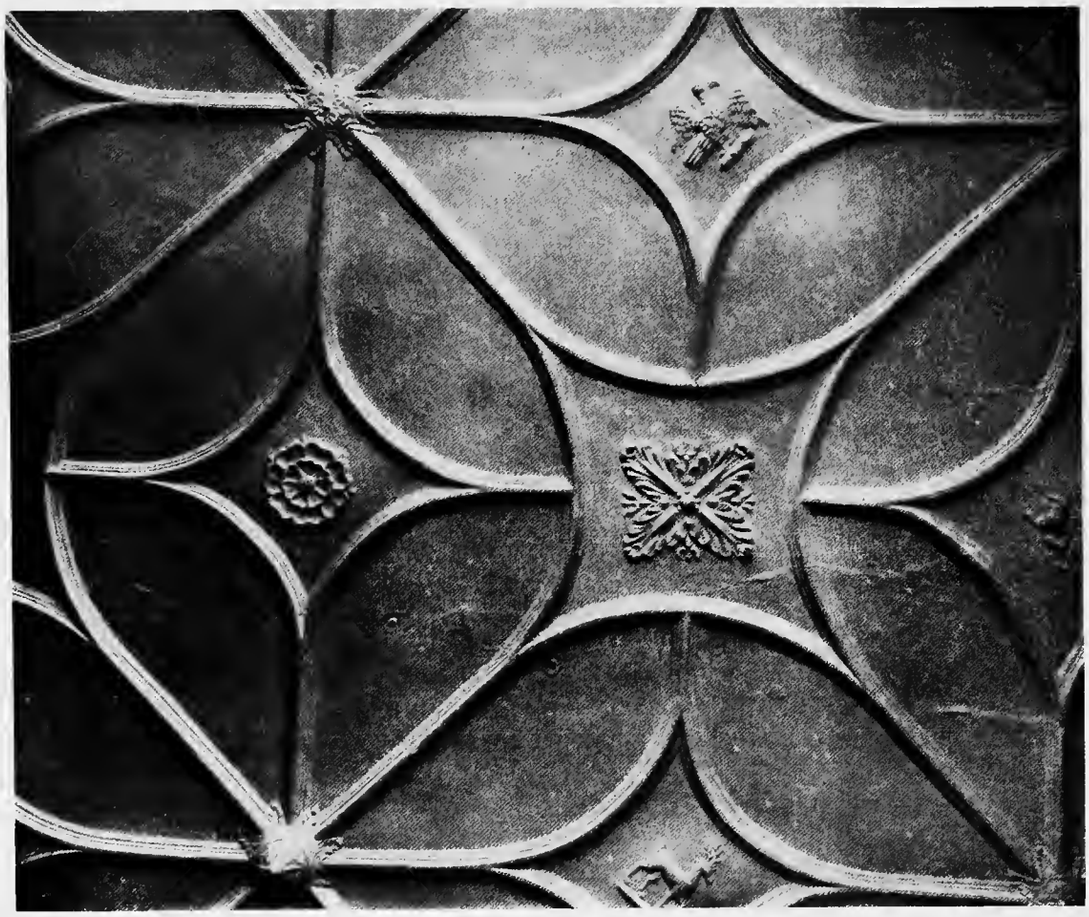
Inigo Jones, accustomed to the universal employment of plaster work in Italy for interior decoration, naturally continued the practice, but his requirements were entirely different; following classic examples, his ceilings were designed with large panels formed by heavy framework, and it was this framework and not the groundwork which required to be enriched; such ornamentation consisted of repetitions of the same pattern, and it would seem natural to first mould such detail and afterwards apply it to the framework rather than to attempt working in situ. The old method, therefore, began to disappear and to be replaced by the newer and quicker process. The ceilings at Rainham are perhaps the finest examples of his work, but there is little to choose between these and others such as Coleshill, Ford Abbey and Whitehall.

The slavish imitation of the designs of Inigo Jones during the early eighteenth century applies equally to decorative work as to architecture, and the

ceiling



PLASTER CEILING AND FRIEZE, EARLY ENGLISH RENAISSANCE

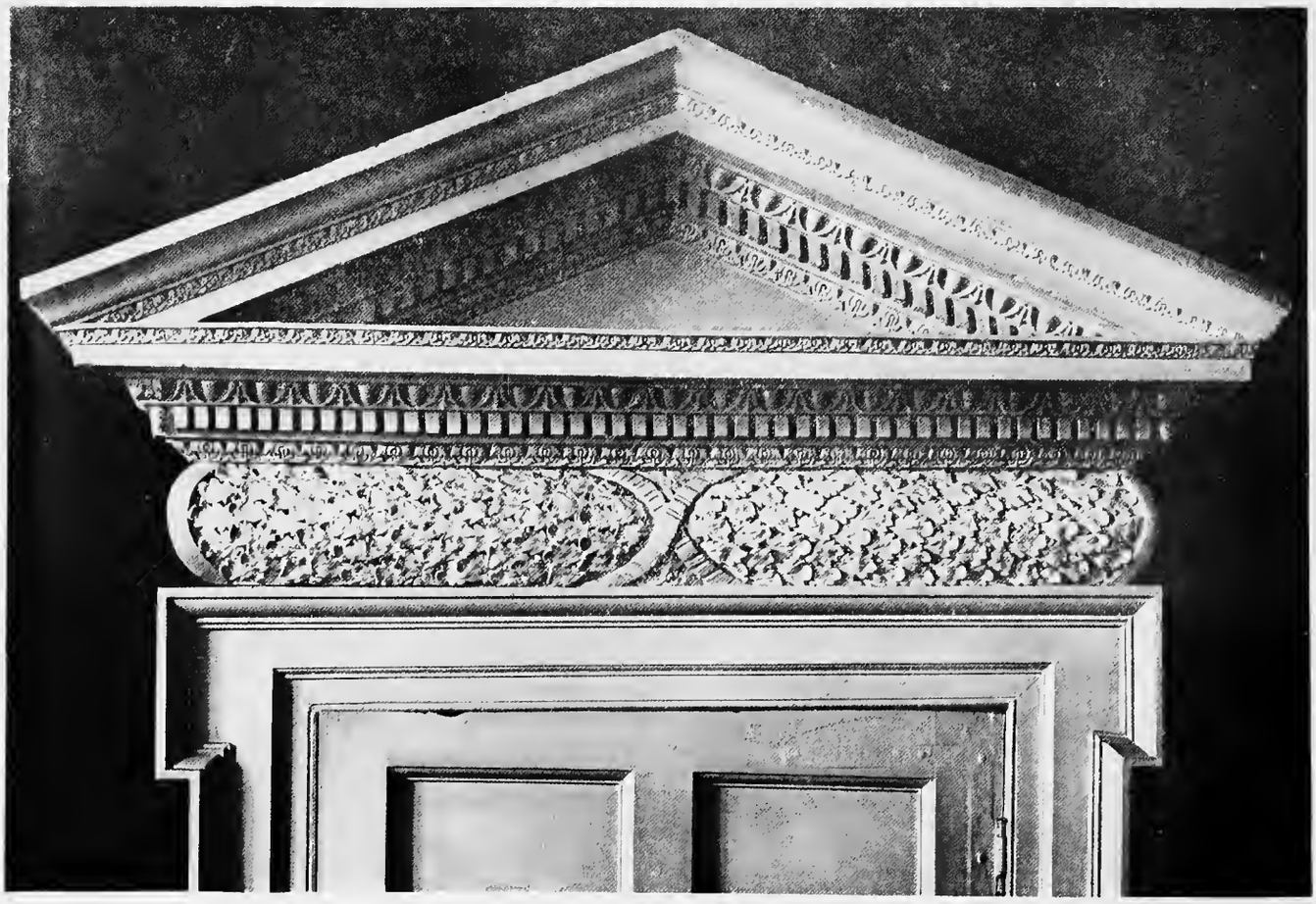


PLASTER CEILING AND FRIEZE, EARLY ENGLISH RENAISSANCE

PLASTER CEILING,
PERIOD OF WREN

PLASTER CORNICE AND COLUMNS, PERIOD OF WREN

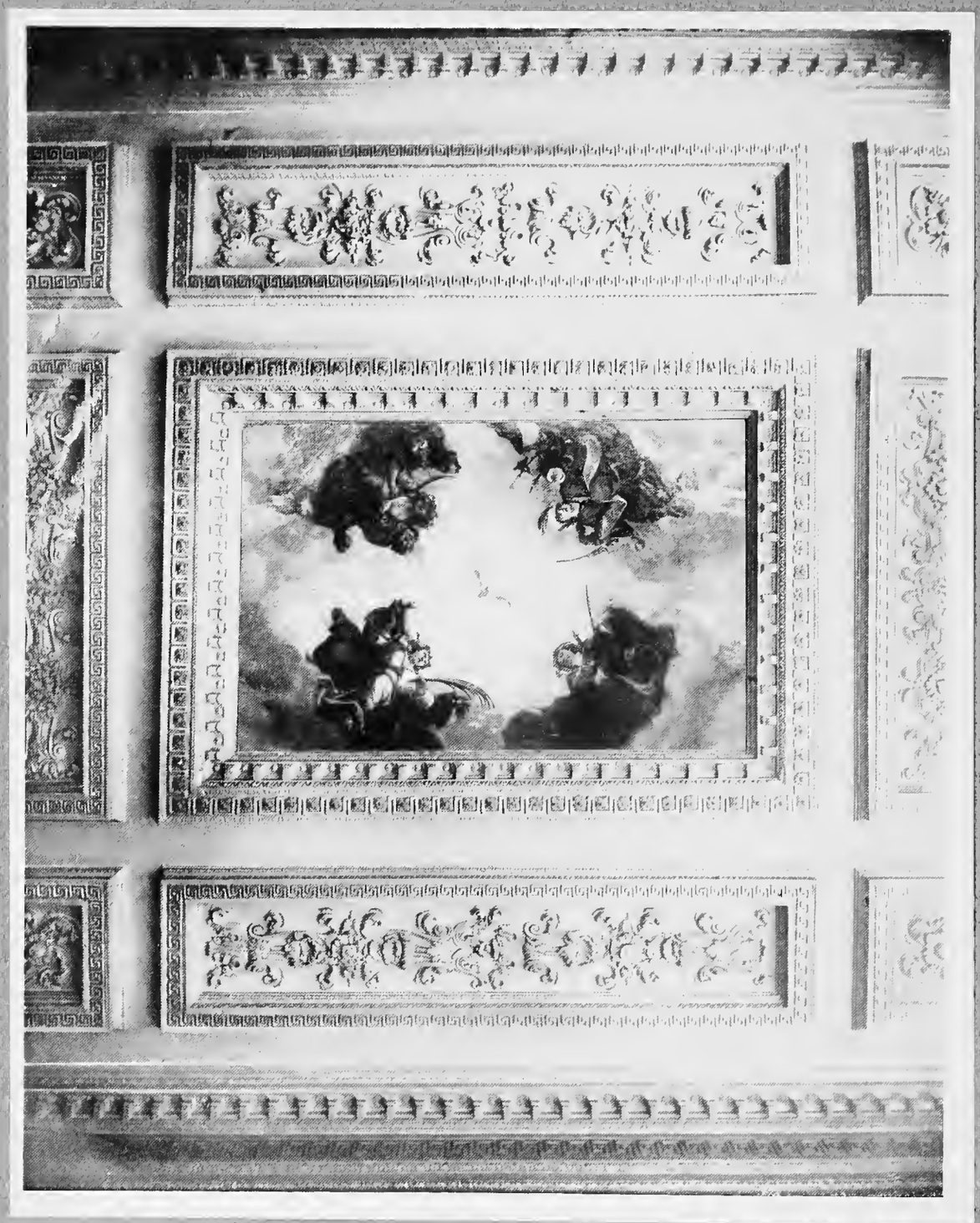
DETAIL OF CEILING IN HALL, BY WILLIAM KENT



PLASTER OVERDOOR, ENGLISH PALLADIAN PERIOD

PLASTER ORNAMENTATION ON DOOR, BY WILLIAM KENT

PLASTER ORNAMENTATION IN HALL, BY WILLIAM KENT



PLASTER ENRICHMENT ON CEILING, ENGLISH PALLADIAN PERIOD

ceiling shown on page 118, which dates from about 1730, was doubtless intended to represent the style of the greatest architect this country has produced. Plaster Ornamentation

During the period of Wren the fashion of panelling the walls with unpainted oak or cedar militated to some extent against the employment of plaster ornamentation; ceilings still required such treatment, but the carvers in wood seem now to have outshadowed the modellers in plaster; indeed, the ceiling decoration of his time, interesting as it is, often suggests the work of the sculptor rather than that of the artist conversant with the proper functions of plaster ornament. The details of the foliage in the beautiful ceiling in the Cedar Room (facing page 1) appear almost separate from the main portion of the work, yet—and here is the main characteristic of the work of the Wren period—notwithstanding the elaboration of ornament, the metallic appearance usually found in modern work is here entirely absent.

On page 113 is shown another specimen of plaster treatment; this example is from a mansion known to have been built shortly after the Restoration of Charles II. As was then usually the case, a painting originally occupied the centre panel of this ceiling.

By the beginning of the eighteenth century the immediate successors of Wren claimed to more correctly interpret classic art by the employment of numerous columns and an abundance of plaster ornamentation. Their work was often unnecessarily heavy and ponderous, but this heaviness of style was soon rectified; the emulation of the earlier work of Inigo Jones and the serious studies of Lord Burlington, Kent, Gibbs and others produced a proper knowledge of the proportions and did much towards improving classic art.

Always excepting the few earlier examples by Inigo Jones, it was during the second quarter of the eighteenth century that the finest classic work in plaster ornament was executed in this country. Such examples as Houghton and Holkham would be difficult to surpass, but the age was prolific in the building of great houses with sumptuously decorated interiors, and numerous instances exist, such as the hall at N° 30 Old Burlington Street, illustrated on page 114, which are worthy to be compared with these splendid examples. If the particulars of his connection with the decoration of this building were not known, a comparison of the general design and of the details with the ornamentation at Houghton would prove the work of William Kent. Probably Artari and Bagotti (whom Gibbs considered the best craftsman who

had ever

Plaster Ornamentation

had ever come to England) were employed by him on the work in both houses.

The fact that it is one of the least expensive methods of important decorative treatment is also worthy of comment. Until recently a peculiar prejudice has existed in England against plaster work, apparently on the plea that it is not genuine; indeed, it is not unusual to first ascertain whether or not such ornament is carved in wood before deciding whether to admire. This prejudice was never shared by the French or Italians, who fail to understand why the work of the modeller in plaster should be less worthy of admiration than carvings in wood.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, all previous styles of plaster ornamentation were outshadowed by the designs of Robert Adam; his manner of internal decoration is well known, both from his pattern books and actual examples of his work still left in London and elsewhere. Undoubtedly this style was an improvement on the "petty vagaries" in the French, Gothic and Chinese taste which for a short time were fashionable crazes; and it can claim to possess refinement, even if somewhat lacking in interest. It would appear from the following extracts from his writings that Adam was well satisfied with his own abilities; after pointing out that the works of "Michael Angelo, Raphael and other Italian architects of the Renaissance were very much misplaced" and deprecating the efforts of Inigo Jones and his successors, he adds: "It seems to have been reserved for the present times to see compartment ceilings and those of every kind carried to a degree of perfection in Great Britain that far surpasses any of the former attempts of other nations." However, he states that "Kent's genius for the picturesque and the vast reputation he deservedly acquired made him in some measure withstand this prevalent abuse; he has much merit, indeed, was the first who began to lighten the compartments."

Robert Adam had obtained a patent for a plaster or stucco process invented by Liardet, and he brought Pergolesi from Italy especially to execute work in this material, from which considerable profits were made. He had also brought over Zucchi, whom for some thirty years he and his brother employed in decorating their plaster ceilings with designs inspired from ancient frescoes. This work of the brothers Adam found many imitators, such as Collins, Rose, Clark and Papworth, and by the end of the century their style was universal; modern reproductions are frequent, but in justice to the work executed during the eighteenth century, it must be remembered

that the

that the original intention was always either to decorate such ceilings in the manner described or to fill in the panels with various tones of colour, whereas the modern examples are almost invariably left plain white, thus producing an entirely different effect. To quote Adam's description: "The glare of the white so common in every ceiling till of late. This always appeared to me so cold and unfurnished that I ventured to introduce this variety of grounds, at once to relieve the ornaments, remove the crudeness of the white and create a harmony between the ceiling and the sidewalls."

CHAPTER IX
THE SCHOOL OF GRINLING GIBBONS

THE work upon which Grinling Gibbons was engaged when discovered by the ingenious Mr Evelyn was a carving from a large painting of the Crucifixion by Tintoretto.

Carvings of this character had been produced in Italy for over a century, and the fashion had been adopted in Holland during her great period of prosperity at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The exterior of classic buildings in that country, as in Italy, were frequently adorned with drops and wreaths carved in marble and in stone, and interiors were decorated with paintings of the same subjects; from such designs in his native land Gibbons may have obtained his inspirations. Sir Christopher Wren, during his visits to Paris, would have seen the elaborate use of applied wood-carvings of the school of Louis XIV. But whatever the source from which the idea of employing this particular style of carving for interior decoration was derived, and whether or not the designs were inspired by that great architect, the results obtained possess so much originality, owing to the naturalistic treatment of the objects portrayed, that we are justified in claiming this class of work as one of the most distinctive features of English decoration.

To assume that the numerous examples which exist in city churches, in public halls, and in the great country-houses of England are all attributable to the hand of Gibbons would be as unreasonable as to suppose that the furniture of the third quarter of the eighteenth century was all the personal work of Chippendale; the form of decoration which he had introduced became the fashion, and numerous skilled craftsmen imitated his style. In their ranks were some of the foreigners whom religious persecutions on the Continent were driving to this country, but mostly they appear to have been English, and the names of some remain, notably William Watson (responsible for the wonderful decorative carvings at Chatsworth), Lobb, Phillips, Davis and Selden.

Of the class of ornament most typical of this school, is that which Celia Fiennes describes in her Diary as: "Y^{e} finest carved wood in fruitages, herbages, gumms, beastes, fowles, etc., very thin and fine all in white wood without paint or varnish. Ye several sorts of things thus carved exceeding natural all round." To such an extent was this class of design developed that it became a recognized type of ornament and was indiscriminately used for the decoration of mansion or church. But another style existed, examples of which are more scarce, namely of subjects designed either to specially illustrate the pur-

pose for

MANTELPIECE WITH CARVINGS BY GRINLING GIBBONS

pose for which the room was intended to be used, or the occupation of the owner. Of the former kind, one of the most remarkable specimens is to be found at the offices of the New River Water Company, where fish, fishing nets and tackle are ingeniously grouped; another interesting example, probably also by Gibbons (see page 129), is in the collection and illustrates the prow of a ship and other naval attributes. Military trophies are scarce, possibly because during the reigns of Charles II and James II there had been few opportunities of obtaining distinction in warfare; the work of Gibbons on the chimney-piece of the drawing-room of the Governor's House at Chelsea Hospital is always regarded as the masterpiece of this style; somewhat similar in composition are the picture frame and the pendant shown on pages 129 and 130 respectively. The inspiration for these designs can be traced to Ancient Rome, and the same class of subject was adopted for the painted panels at Hampton Court; other instances are to be met with on seventeenth century classic buildings both in France and Holland.

School of Grinling Gibbons

Most frequently these decorative carvings were executed in lime-wood, the use of oak being generally regarded as denoting the earlier work of the period; probably the specimen on page 127, made from the latter material and reputed to be by Grinling Gibbons, is of earlier date than the examples reproduced on the two following pages, both of which are of lime-wood. All three were designed to serve as embellishments of the upper parts of chimney-pieces, but the composition, the treatment and the subjects vary so much that each would seem to have been executed by a different artist. The collection contains many examples of these decorative carvings, but few can surpass these three specimens, either in design or workmanship: the one shown on page 129 being of special interest, as portraying the crown, cipher and supporters used by Charles II.

As already mentioned, the carvings of the school of Grinling Gibbons and his fellow craftsmen were, perhaps, most frequently employed as decoration of the upper part of chimney-pieces (always the principal feature in English apartments); the particular style consisted of two swags joined in the centre by some special ornament, and from the outer ends pendants with the same *motif* were suspended. The space thus surrounded was sometimes occupied by a coat-of-arms (as the example at the New River Company's offices), sometimes by a portrait or picture, and frequently simply by an oak panel; occasionally, as at Chatsworth, this panel was embellished by a star or geometrical design formed by inlays of various kinds of wood; this style of

treatment

School of Grinling Gibbons

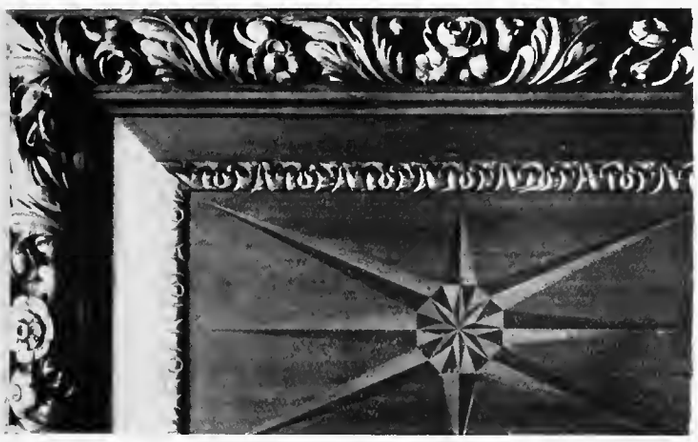
treatment (which is illustrated on page 127) was borrowed from Holland, and only appears to have been used for mural decoration at about the period of Grinling Gibbons; much contemporary furniture being then similarly ornamented; in several great mansions oak and walnut floors exist inlaid with various patterns of the same style.

The small carving shown on the left of page 130 is believed to be by the hand of Gibbons, and probably came either from one of the city churches upon which he was employed, or from the private chapel of a great mansion; it is very similar to the centre ornament in the table shown on the same page.

The art of the wood-carvers of this school was not confined to the groups of "fruitages" or trophies which adorned altars, mantels and panels, but the elaboration of cornices, architraves and mouldings also found scope for their talents, and added to that wealth of gorgeous decoration for which the finest apartments of this period are so famous; the small piece of cornice shown on page 127, on which can be seen the cipher of William and Mary, is representative of such ornamental detail.

The specimens illustrated in this chapter prove the immense value which must be attached to the applied wood-carvings of this school as a means of decoration: even the simplest examples are sufficient to convert a plainly panelled room into one of special interest; at subsequent periods decorative carvings were also employed, but the peculiar style in vogue during the period of Wren is characteristic only of his times.

UPPER PART OF MANTELPIECE. CARVINGS IN OAK



CENTRE PANEL OF MANTELPIECE WITH INLAID GEOMETRICAL PATTERN

OAK CORNICE WITH CIPHER OF WILLIAM AND MARY

UPPER PART OF MANTELPIECE, WITH CARVINGS IN THE STYLE OF GIBBONS

UPPER PART OF MANTELPIECE WITH CIPHER OF CHARLES II

CARVINGS OF NAVAL TROPHIES

PICTURE FRAME WITH MILITARY TROPHIES, CIRCA 1700
(THE PICTURE ITSELF OF LATER DATE)

Lenygon & Co Ltd

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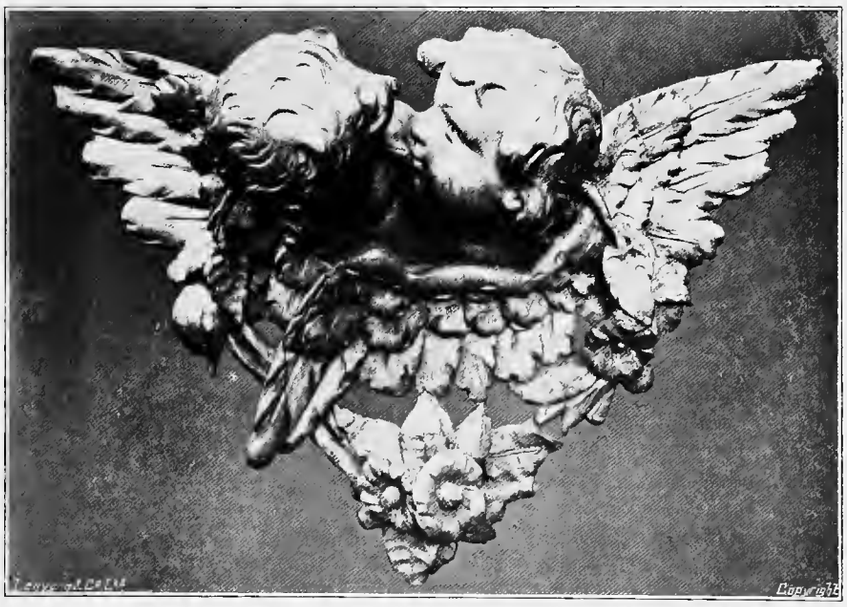

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TABLE, SMALL CARVING AND PENDANT: SCHOOL OF GRINLING GIBBONS

CHAPTER X. DECORATIVE PAINTINGS

NOTWITHSTANDING his failure as a ruler, no English monarch did more than Charles I to encourage art and genius. Inigo Jones was his architect and Vandyke his Court painter, but it was Rubens who influenced his taste and advised as to the numerous treasures which he collected. Rubens came to England in 1629 on a political mission as ambassador from Spain, but before his arrival he was recognized as the greatest authority of his time on art and culture; he was only here about one year, but his influence remained for upwards of a century.

Magnificence in decoration has never since equalled the work in Rome under Julius II, Leo X and the other great Popes of the Renaissance. The paintings of Leonardo da Vinci, Michael Angelo, Raphael, Perugino and many others during that period illustrate the fact that painting was regarded by them as a means of decoration. Owing to the pre-eminence of the Church the subjects they illustrated were almost entirely religious. Titian, Paul Veronese, Tintoretto and many others followed their examples and embellished the walls and ceilings of numerous palaces in Venice and Genoa, but here the requirements were different; art was no longer entirely the handmaiden of the Church, so that instead of religious subjects the scenes were chosen from history, classic mythology and allegory. In addition to his earlier work at Mantua, "the town of Giulio Romano" (where for generations members of the reigning family had devoted themselves to art), Rubens had studied the examples of these great artists, and it can be claimed that he introduced painting as decorative treatment into Northern Europe. His services were required at every Court; even the French Queen, Marie de' Medici, although herself an Italian, employed him for the embellishment of her Palace of the Luxembourg.

Holbein, Antonio More, Jansen and other portrait painters had worked previously in England, but before the arrival of Rubens there had been no artist capable of composing and executing historical subjects. James I proposed building a palace at Whitehall, and Charles I, more ambitious, intended that it should surpass any possessed by rival monarchs; but only the Banqueting Hall, that wonderful example of the work of Inigo Jones, was actually erected. Rubens was paid £3,000 for the ceiling painting in this building. Vandyke was to have decorated the walls with "the history of the Order of the Garter"; sketches were prepared, but the work itself was never commenced

menced. To quote Horace Walpole: "Inigo Jones, Rubens, Vandyke: Europe could not have shown a nobler chamber."

Another ceiling painting by Rubens was afterwards brought to this country, namely, by Sir Francis Child in 1760, for the decoration of the staircase at Osterley, the subject being "The Apotheosis of William Prince of Orange."

The ceilings of Inigo Jones are all designed with panels, presumably with the intention of their being eventually completed by the insertion of paintings—compare the one at Whitehall with other examples also designed by him, in which the paintings are omitted and the original intention seems obvious. Gentileschi, brought by Vandyke to England, carried on the work of decorative painting instituted by Rubens. He painted many ceilings for the King and for the nobility, such as at York House and Old Buckingham House; while at Cobham Hall in Kent he filled in the compartments designed by Inigo Jones. After the execution of the King, nine of his paintings (intended for mural decoration of the palace at Greenwich) were sold and eventually found their way to Marlborough House.

John de Critz, Sergeant Painter to James I and Charles I, had a great reputation for decorative paintings and was succeeded in his office by his brother Emanuel. Evelyn, in 1654, refers to the new dining-room at Wilton built by Inigo Jones as being "richly gilded and painted with story" by him. Evelyn also mentions other apartments in the same mansion as containing "hunting landskips" by Pierce. This artist had been an assistant to Vandyke, and after the Restoration was employed to repair the altarpieces and ceilings in London churches damaged by the Puritans.

Other Dutch painters, such as Wouters and Hanneman, executed decorative works in England, but returned to their own country during the troubles of the monarchy. Daniel Mytens, who had painted portraits in England during the reigns of James I and Charles I, also returned and painted the ceiling in the Town Hall of The Hague in 1654, the subject being "Truth writing history on the back of Fame."

With the restoration of the monarchy this class of work again flourished, and none of the numerous great mansions then built were considered to be complete until so decorated. Unfortunately no kind of painting in England has suffered so much from time, neglect and demolition as that for ceilings and wall decorations; faulty roofs and floors and dampness of the structure are obvious causes; owing to the difficulties of removal the paintings have been left

THE "PAINTED ROOM" AT 31 OLD BURLINGTON STREET

been left to decay in tenantless houses, without receiving the periodical restoration which for this class of painting is essential. In addition to more recent restorations, the ceiling by Rubens in Whitehall was repaired by Walton (whose charge of £212 Sir Christopher Wren considered as "very modyst and reasonable"), by Kent and later by Cipriani at a further cost of £2,000.

At the Restoration Streater was appointed Sergeant Painter to the King, and Pepys relates how Dr Wren, afterwards Sir Christopher, and other virtuosos, considered his work better than that of Rubens, although he himself did not agree. John Evelyn often refers to the work of Mr Streater, and especially relates how he had decorated the dining-room in the wealthy Sir Robert Clayton's new house with paintings illustrative of the "Historie of the Gyants War." A contemporary poet wrote of the ceiling at Oxford painted by this artist:

> That future ages must confess they owe
> To Streater more than Michael Angelo.

He also worked for the Earl of Chesterfield and was employed at Bulstrode, and painted several ceilings in the old palace at Whitehall. So much were painted rooms the vogue that even fashionable taverns were decorated in this manner: Pepys relates how "The Pope's Head" possessed "its fine painted room." Fuller, who had executed several commissions for the King, was employed to paint the parlours of several taverns: at "The Mitre" in Fenchurch Street "he adorned all the sides of a great room in panels as was then the fashion; the figures were as large as life, and on the ceiling two angels supporting a mitre, in a large circle."

Dankers, who painted the panels for Pepys's dining-room, was another Dutch artist who worked in England during this period; the subjects chosen by Mr Pepys were probably copies of paintings which this artist had previously executed for the King and the Duke of York, and of which he had received permission to make repetitions. Michael Wright, a fashionable portrait painter, did the ceiling for the King's bedchamber; and Tomaso, who executed ceiling and panels at Wilton, is another of the principal painters in the style of Rubens during the reign of Charles II. During the short reign of James II, La Fosse, a French artist, attained some celebrity for decorative work, and received £2,500 for his services at Montagu House. Heude worked extensively for Lord Tyrconnel and at Bulstrode.

The decoration of ceilings and complete rooms by paintings was even more

Decorative Paintings

more universal during the seventeenth century in Holland than in England, and the talent there available was certainly greater; the house of nearly every rich burgomaster contained one or more examples. Consequently, with the accession of William III, the fashion still further increased in this country, and amongst the numerous artists who found employment here are: Peter Birchett, responsible for the ceiling at Trinity College, Oxford, the staircase at Schomberg House and various works at Ranelagh; Chéron, employed at Boughton, Chatsworth and Burleigh; Henry Cook, who painted the ceiling at the offices of the New River Company, where are also the celebrated carvings of Grinling Gibbons; Parmentier, who had previously worked for King William in his Palace at Loo, was extensively employed decorating mansions in the North of England, notably Worksop; also Pelegrini, who painted the staircase for the Duke of Manchester in Arlington Street, and similar work for the Duke of Portland and Lord Burlington, as well as the saloon, staircase and ceilings at Castle Howard, and the staircase at Kimbolton. In many of the works he was assisted by Marco and Sebastian Ricci.

But more celebrated than any of these was Verrio; his first work in England is recorded by Evelyn as being at Lord Arlington's house at Euston; he became so much the fashion that the great nobles vied with each other to obtain his services. Celia Fiennes refers to examples of his skill at Burleigh, Lowther, Chatsworth and Windsor; she regarded his work as the standard of excellence in painting in the same way as she regarded the work of Grinling Gibbons as the standard for carving. For his paintings at Windsor Castle alone he received upwards of £8,000. Laguerre (who worked frequently with Verrio) also became famous; he was employed at Marlborough House, Burley-on-the-Hill, St Bartholomew's Hospital, Blenheim and Hampton Court. Verrio, not satisfied with filling in compartments of ceilings such as Inigo Jones had designed, omitted the divisions, as well as the usual classic cornices, and rounded over the angle of the wall and ceiling so that his paintings could spread over the whole surface without apparent break. This style, which he copied from Italy, was adopted by others; it certainly gave a heavy appearance to the apartments so treated, and the figures continuing from wall to ceiling appeared unnatural. Criticism and ridicule followed, and Pope's satire of "Where sprawled the saints of Verrio" did much to kill the fashion of historical and allegorical paintings as wall and ceiling decorations.

Lanscroon (whose best work is at Drayton), Brown, Bellucci and Amiconi, all

coni, all attained celebrity; even Sir Godfrey Kneller, although essentially a portrait painter, executed a staircase for Pope's villa at Twickenham in chiaroscuro, which paintings were bequeathed to Earl Bathurst. One of the last of the decorative artists of the school of Rubens was Sir James Thornhill, celebrated for work on the dome of St Paul's, the hall at Blenheim, various paintings at Greenwich, Hampton Court, Easton Neston and Moor Park. Decorative Paintings

Former reference has been omitted to the work of Francis Cleyne. He came to England during the latter part of the reign of James I to design subjects for the tapestry manufactory at Mortlake, but he also carried out considerable decorative work in a style of grotesque, chiefly in small panels. Most interesting examples of his skill remain on ceilings, walls and furniture at Holland House, and further instances, not in such good preservation, are at Bolsover. It is also known that he worked at Somerset House, at Hanworth, and at many other mansions of the nobility.

Another artist, but of quite another school, requires to be mentioned, namely, Clermont, who worked a century later; he was very extensively employed by the nobility during the reign of George II; he painted grotesques and foliages with birds and monkeys. Monkey Island on the Thames is so called from pictures he painted in the Duke of Marlborough's temples there; he also did the dining-room ceiling in Horace Walpole's Gothic villa at Twickenham and the walls of a similar apartment in Lord Stafford's house in St James's Square. A ceiling at N° 30 Old Burlington Street is believed to be by his hand. During the reign of our first George, while England was steeped in the strictest Palladianism, considerable latitude of classic models was permitted in French decoration. The influence of the school of Watteau and Gillot was felt in England; Nollekens and Slater imitated their work, the latter adapting it to the ceiling at Stowe and Mereworth in Kent.

Although nearly all the artists referred to above were either of Flemish, Dutch or Italian birth, yet they all worked in this country; but paintings required for decorating rooms in English mansions were also supplied by artists living in Holland. The room by Hondecoeter at Belton is an instance, but it would be hard to find a finer example of a painted room than the one in the collection, an illustration of which is given on page 133, as well as a separate view of the chimney-piece on page 145; but another treatise has been issued illustrating each of the panels and relating its history. This room is by no means the only example which is exhibited—the whole of one side of the long Blue Saloon is occupied with seventeenth century paintings representing hunting

Decorative Paintings

ing hunting scenes (see page 141), and in one of the smaller rooms is a large picture by De Vos (a pupil of Snyder), which is reputed to be one of the set which decorated the hall in the great house at Bulstrode, pulled down during the last century.

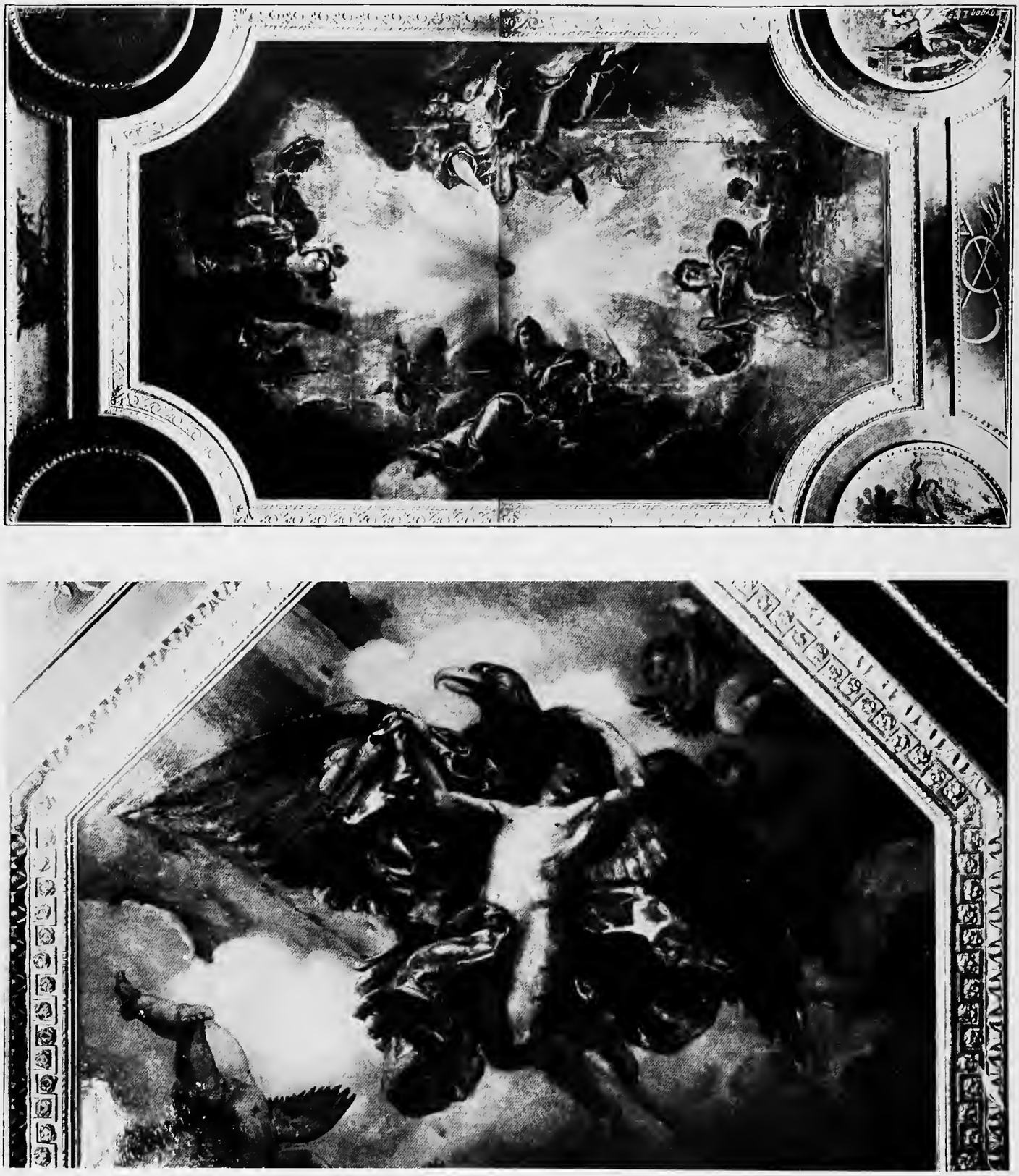
At the top of page 140 is shown the painted ceiling in the first State Room; the photograph, however, hardly does justice to the original. For upwards of a century this painting has been attributed to Gerard de Lairesse, a celebrated Dutch artist, but the fact that it is dated 1711, the year of his death, makes that attribution somewhat doubtful. Lairesse, although afflicted with almost complete loss of sight in 1690, then fifty years of age, continued to the end to communicate his theories and to compose classic subjects; it is possible, therefore, that it was either finished or painted by some artist friend or pupil under his advice.

The ceiling painted in the second State Room (on the same page), which is a modern one, after the school of Verrio, hardly equals the example in the adjoining room, but as decorative treatment the result is excellent, and its addition has done much to increase the charm and stateliness of this beautiful apartment. The ceiling in the painted room, representing Jupiter and Juno in the Heavens, was executed by a celebrated Dutch artist, Hermanus Collenius. This was removed from a house built in the reign of Queen Anne, and the boards on which the ceiling is painted were, naturally, fixed to the joists from underneath; in order to preserve the surface each of the nails had to be sawn through on the upper side, a work of considerable difficulty.

Another Dutch artist who attained eminence for the decoration of splendid apartments was Jacob de Wit. In 1712 he made drawings from the paintings by Rubens in the four ceilings of the Jesuits' Church in Antwerp, which was destroyed by lightning six years later. One of his principal works was the embellishment of the great Council Chamber at Amsterdam with subjects from the Old Testament.

Boucher and Fragonard are perhaps the two painters who most prominently represent the French school of decorative painters at the middle of the eighteenth century. For Madame de Pompadour the former painted the decorations of her boudoir at the Hotel de l'Arsenal, and the latter is responsible for the five paintings forming the entire decoration of a room illustrating "The Lovers Progress"; these once belonged to Mr Malvilan, and were purchased in 1898 by Mr Pierpont Morgan for £50,000; they were exhibited at the Guildhall in London in 1902.

STAIRCASE PAINTING



PAINTED CEILINGS IN THE TWO STATE ROOMS AT 31 OLD BURLINGTON STREET

PAINTED PANEL IN SALON AT 31 OLD BURLINGTON STREET

Walpole, who claims to "speak with equal impartiality on the merits and faults of Kent, the former of which exceedingly predominated," considered the staircase at Kensington as "the least defective work of his pencil." The restorations which it has undergone make it difficult for us now to judge of its merits; the ceiling over this stairway appears very similar to a drawing published by Daniel Marot, some twenty years before Kent was employed there. The staircase ceiling at N° 31 Old Burlington Street in some respects resembles this example, and as a decorative scheme is certainly successful.

Decorative Paintings

Another class of ceiling treatment frequently adopted by Kent, especially in cases where the surface was divided up with plaster framework into a number of separate panels, was to fill in the side compartments with classic designs of trophies and emblems in monochrome. Sometimes the centre panel of such ceilings contained an oil painting of allegorical design, and sometimes the arms of the owner were introduced, also in monochrome; this style of painting in various shades of the same colour was also largely employed by Kent for decorating flat surfaces, into which he introduced representations of panels formed by classic mouldings and often allegorical figures.

In Holland by the middle of the seventeenth century, the mania for collecting porcelain and all kinds of curiosities from China and India was in full force; this soon developed a fashion for Eastern styles of ornament for the decoration of furniture and even of complete rooms. The mode spread to France and England, and, indeed, in this country the craze continued more or less intermittently until past the middle of the following century: as applied to furniture, numerous cabinets, bureaus and chests of drawers and so on were decorated with lacquer work, either executed in China or imitated locally with the same style of ornament: this lac treatment, applied to the panelling of the late seventeenth century, produced extremely quaint and charming effects, especially for small apartments. Celia Fiennes speaks of a small room at Hampton Court "pannell'd all wth jappan," and other instances exist of rooms in English country houses in which the panelling is lacquered all over in either black or red and further ornamented with Chinese figures.

Another scheme for applying "Chinese" taste to the decoration of rooms was by painting the devices on paper, afterwards affixed to canvas and hung on the walls in the same way as the velvets and damasks were used during this period. As in the case of lacquer work, this decorated paper was sometimes

Decorative Paintings

times obtained from China (an example can be seen in the drawing-room of the "House in the Wood" at The Hague), but more frequently was the work of local artists; their knowledge of Eastern life was limited, so that the results were often quaint, but, however incorrect the drawings were as representing Eastern art, the talent of the artists was often great, and charming results, especially for decorating small rooms, were obtained. Many English mansions contained such "Chinese" or "Indian" rooms, some executed at the latter part of the seventeenth century, then generally by Dutch artists, and some as late as the middle of the next century, when the Dutch influence had disappeared entirely; later this hand-painted work was superseded by printed wall-papers, and although attempts were made to avoid the monotony of the repeated printed design by cutting out and pasting on birds, flowers, etc., in odd places, the results cannot, of course, compare to the former method.

In 1746, referring to Cornbury, Mrs Delany writes: "The next room is hung with finest Indian paper of flowers and all sorts of birds, the ceilings are all ornamented in the Indian taste, the frames of the glass and all the finishing of the room are well suited; the bedchamber is also hung with Indian paper on a gold ground, and the bed is Indian work of silks and gold on white satin."

The two illustrations given on page 142 are panels out of a complete room, and serve as charming models for the work of this style. It is impossible to fix the exact date of the painting, but probably it was the work of a Dutch artist during the reign of William and Mary.

CHIMNEY-PIECE IN THE "PAINTED ROOM"

CHAPTER XI. VELVETS, DAMASKS, ETC.

NO description of the decoration of English mansions built during the latter part of the seventeenth century, or the first half of the eighteenth, would be complete without special reference to the splendid velvets, damasks, silks, brocatelles, braids, fringes, etc., which were then so largely used. In a few cases these materials were of English manufacture, but by far the larger quantity were imported from Italy. Endeavours had been made in the reign of James I to foster the silk-weaving industry, foreign workmen being employed; and in 1638 a Royal proclamation was issued with the object of encouraging it; these earlier efforts, however, practically resulted in failures. During the earlier part of the reign of Louis XIV the manufacture of velvets, damasks and silks had made great progress in France, but, in common with so many other trades, the enormous influx of religious immigrants at the latter part of the seventeenth century transferred a large share of the industry to England.

After the Edict of Nantes, the number of looms in Lyons fell from 18,000 to 4,000, and in Tours only 70 mills remained out of 700. The English silk industry grew so fast that importation was totally forbidden. The stimulus was not merely temporary; throughout the reigns of William and Mary, and Anne, the silk trade advanced fast; French methods were copied and the goods were being sold as "French," whether produced there or by the refugees in England. By the middle of the eighteenth century the trade, centred chiefly in the neighbourhood of Spitalfields, was an important one; however, it was principally confined to producing the thinner qualities, such as were then used for the gorgeous dresses of both sexes; the imported material being preferred for the elaborate bed hangings, curtains and valances, as well as for the covering of furniture.

Velvets had been made in Holland since the beginning of the seventeenth century, and the earliest specimens somewhat resemble the Italian examples from which they were copied, but later the Utrecht variety (very similar to what is still sold under that name) was all that country produced, and this was not nearly fine enough for the requirements of the English nobles. Lombardy, Tuscany and the neighbouring States had been producing magnificent velvets and damasks for nearly two centuries, and by the time the Italian Renaissance had attained its full bloom, at the end of the sixteenth century, classic designs were then perfected to a degree never since surpassed. To suit the florid taste (especially of Venice) during the next century

Velvets and Damasks

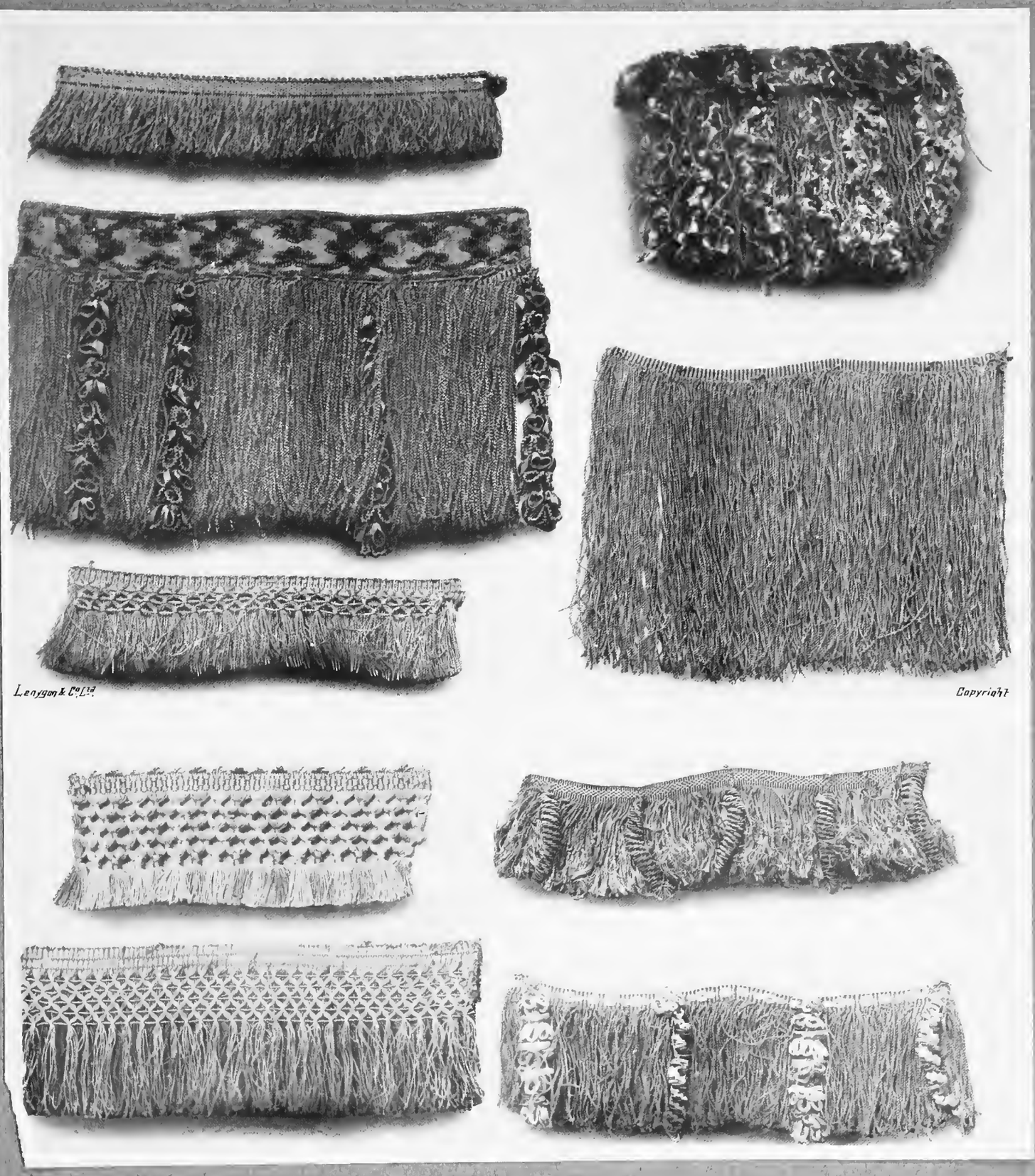
tury, the designs became more redundant and brighter colours were adopted. With the stagnation which then commenced in all Italian enterprise, little or no further change was made, and the same patterns and colourings continued to be produced, almost without variation, until the middle of the eighteenth century. It is this which makes it often so difficult to determine exactly the date the materials were produced.

References to velvets and silks in old inventories are innumerable, but the contents of Ham House in 1679 will serve as a typical example. This mansion was furnished during the reign of James I and its owners had been wealthy and prominent from then until the date in question. Here the sitting-room occupied by the Duchess of Lauderdale was hung with black and gold striped silk, fringed with purple and gold; her bedchamber with crimson damask flowered with gold and bordered with a heavy fringe of gold drops, and her dressing-room with blue damask edged with striped silk and fringe. The Duke's closet was provided with "Three Pieces of Black and Gould Colour hangings of damask," and the bed curtains were to match. His dressing-room had two sets of hangings for the walls. The withdrawing room was hung with crimson damask and the adjoining bedchamber with yellow damask.

The instructions sent by the Duchess of Marlborough, in 1708, to the Earl of Manchester in Venice illustrate the enormous quantities which were necessary. She required for completing the furnishing of Blenheim no less than 3,400 yards of various qualities of velvets, damasks and satin.

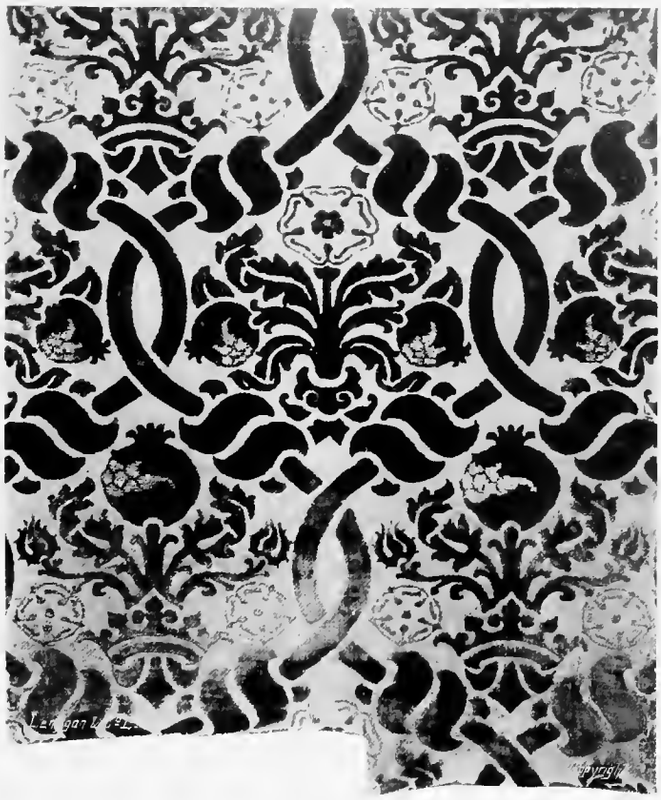
The accompanying illustrations show a few specimens from the collection at N° 31 Old Burlington Street of velvets, such as were imported by the wealthy to this country from Venice, Genoa and France; they also represent some of the braids, fringes, galloons, cords and tassels which completed the sumptuous upholstery of state furniture in England during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

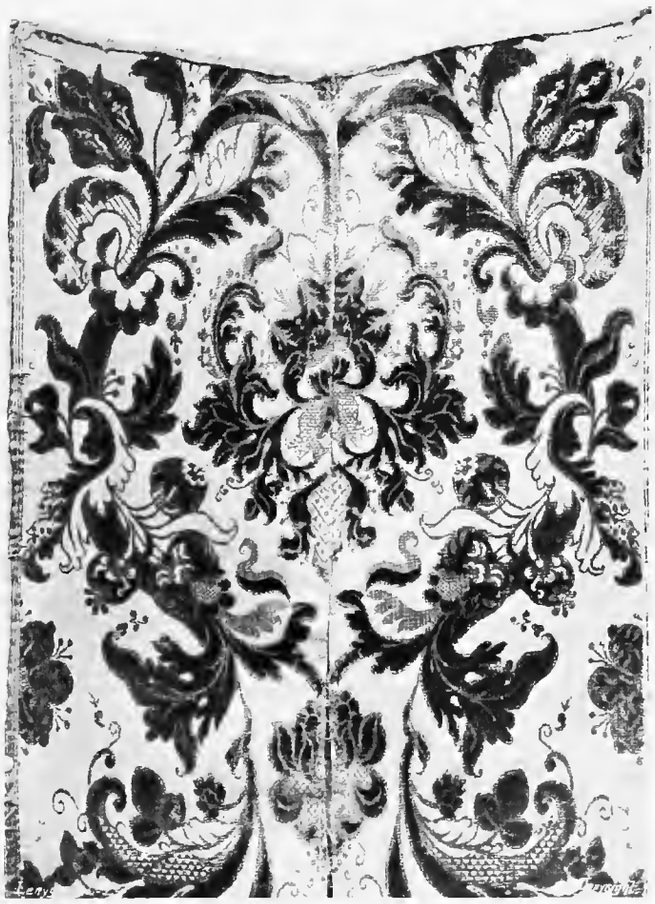
Many other fabrics also existed, which, although unknown to-day, were largely used in upholstery up to the early part of the eighteenth century; "camlet" and "mohair" are instances, another is the strong woollen "watered" rep material (at least this is the nearest possible description) which, after removing the successive coverings on old chairs and settees, is frequently found to have been the original upholstery; it is met with in red, green, and sometimes a peculiar shade of orange colour. It is curious why the use of this inexpensive and durable material has been abandoned, especially considering how particularly suitable it is for use on Chippendale furniture.



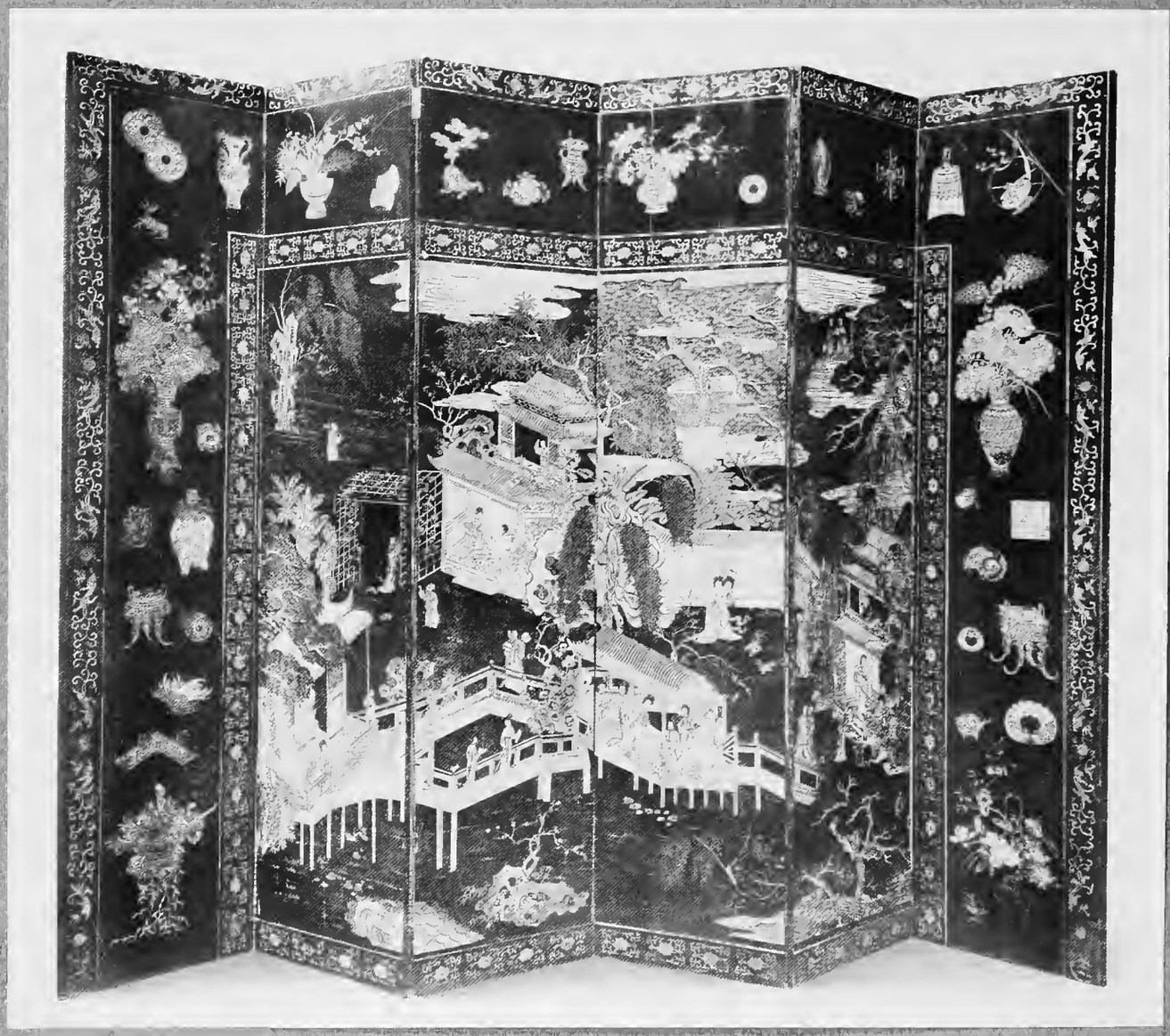
SPECIMENS OF SEVENTEENTH AND EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY FRINGES

SPECIMENS OF OLD
GENOESE VELVET





SPECIMENS OF OLD GENOESE VELVET



INCISED CHINESE LACQUER SCREEN

CHAPTER XII. LACQUERED FURNITURE

THE earliest, and at the same time the best, examples of lacquer which we possess in England were originally obtained in Japan by the few favoured Dutch and Portuguese merchants, who, for a short time at the beginning of the seventeenth century, resided and traded in that country. These specimens went to Portugal and to Holland, but it is doubtful whether any reached England previous to the restoration of the monarchy. Hampton Court was noted for the luxuries it contained, and yet, in the inventory of Cromwell's goods, (with the exception of carpets) there is no reference to any articles of Oriental origin. However, in 1662, when visiting this palace to "see the new Queene, who, having landed at Portsmouth, had been married to the King a week before," Evelyn relates that she "had brought over with her from Portugal such Indian cabinets which had never before ben seene here." Later, in the same reign, he mentions the "japand cabinets and screenes in the Duchess of Portsmouth's dressing-room" at Whitehall. From this date, numerous references in diaries and inventories prove that most mansions of the nobility contained examples, screens particularly being frequently mentioned; indeed, such articles seem to have become almost necessities.

The panels of these lacquered screens were also used by rich Burgomasters in Holland for decorating the complete sides of rooms; several apartments so ornamented still exist in that country. The fashion was copied here; John Evelyn describes the house of his neighbour, Mr Bohun, as "a cabinet of all elegances, especially Indian. In the hall contrivances of Japanese skreenes instead of wainscott .... the landskip on the skreene represents the manner of living and country of the Chinese." This reference is particularly interesting as showing what little knowledge then existed as to the differences between the wares of India, China and Japan; indeed, it was not until quite recently that any reliance could be placed on descriptions of lacquered articles as correctly describing the country of their origin.

A fine example is illustrated on page 154 of the type of screen purchased by the rich during the third quarter of the seventeenth century; it may have come here from Amsterdam, but possibly was imported direct, as our own East India Company had by then commenced to seriously compete with the Dutch. The lacquering is "incised," a variety which has never been imitated by Europeans. This class of work is frequently termed "Coromandel," the popular idea being that it is manufactured from the wood bearing that name; however, Coromandel is in India and the work is produced in China. The

misnomer

misnomer may arise from the fact that the black and brown groundwork somewhat resembles the colour of such timber. The cabinet on page 160, which is in the same collection, is a fine specimen of Chinese lacquer such as was imported into this country at the close of the seventeenth century.

By the middle of the seventeenth century the Dutch had commenced to imitate Chinese and Japanese lacquering, undoubtedly for commercial purposes and not, as afterwards became the mode in England, as a fashionable occupation. In 1688 J. Stalker published *A Treatise on Japanning and Varnishing*, which gives elaborate recipes for the preparation of the groundwork and the means of applying the necessary gilding and ornamentation. It also shows how the industry, which had become important, was already suffering from the competition of amateurs.

During the reigns of George I and George II this fashion of decorating furniture with imitations of Oriental lacquer still further increased, and numerous lacquered articles continued to be produced.

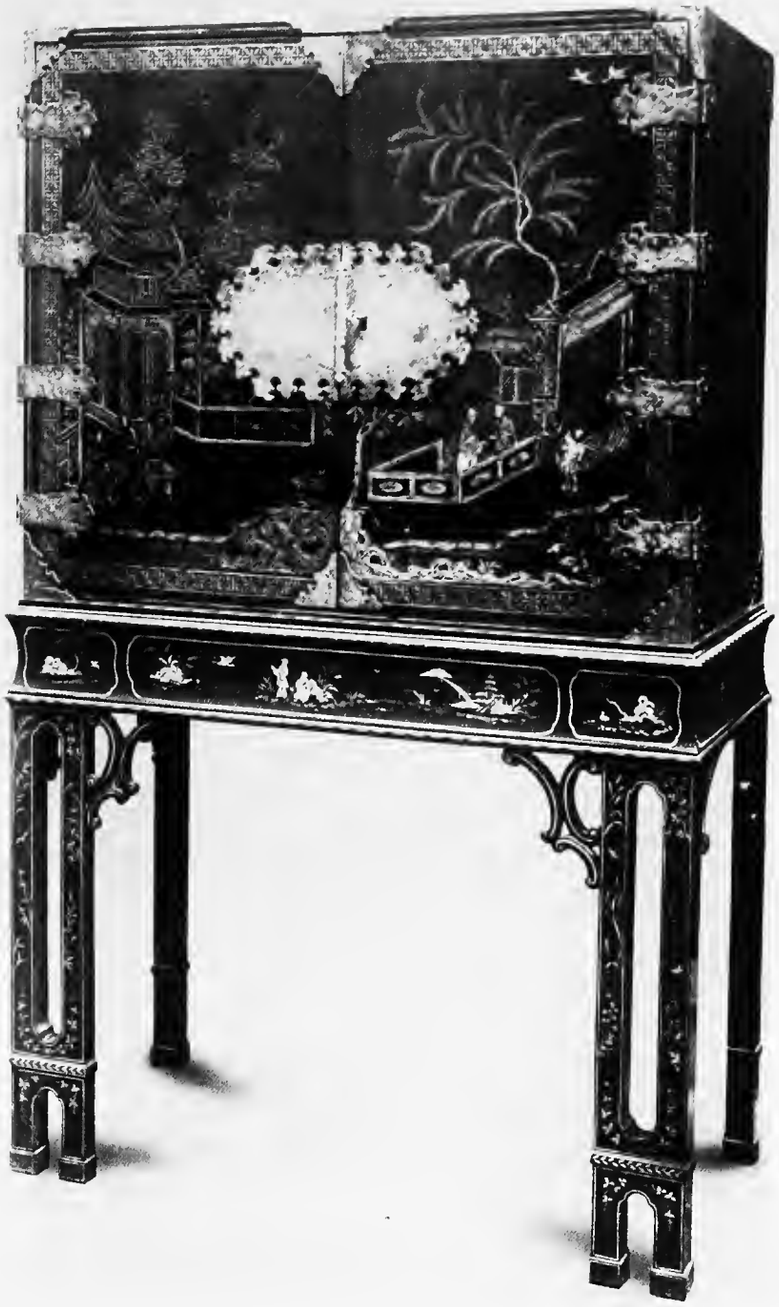
At the beginning of the reign of George II Mrs Pendarves (afterwards Mrs Delany) was a much sought after young widow leading a fashionable life in London. Various letters to her sister illustrate the then craze for imitating Chinese lacquering. She relates how "everybody is mad about Japan work," and especially refers to her friend, Lady Sunderland, daughter of Sarah Duchess of Marlborough, as "being very busy about japanning." Possessing both energy and talent, she probably succeeded better than most of her acquaintance, and writes: "I will perfect myself in the art against I make you a visit," and again, "I hope to be a dab at it by the time I see you"; later she advises, "the laying of the ground . . . . you will find it difficult unless I can show you the way, which I hope next summer to accomplish." Finally, she wittily sums up the whole art: "It puts me in mind of the fine ladies of our age—it delighted my eyes, but gave no pleasure to my understanding."

During recent years it has been the fashion to "collect" old English lacquered furniture. Often specimens, obviously the efforts of the merest amateurs, have fetched prices far beyond any artistic value which they can claim to possess. To-day there should be no difficulty in producing either black or red lac work, if the old methods are sufficiently studied, and provided the same care, patience, and especially the same amount of time, are devoted to the purpose as our forbears found necessary to obtain their best results. The dressing-mirror shown on page 160 is a reproduction of a particularly fine old example.

When

CABINET OF ENGLISH LACQUER ON GILT STAND, CIRCA 1680

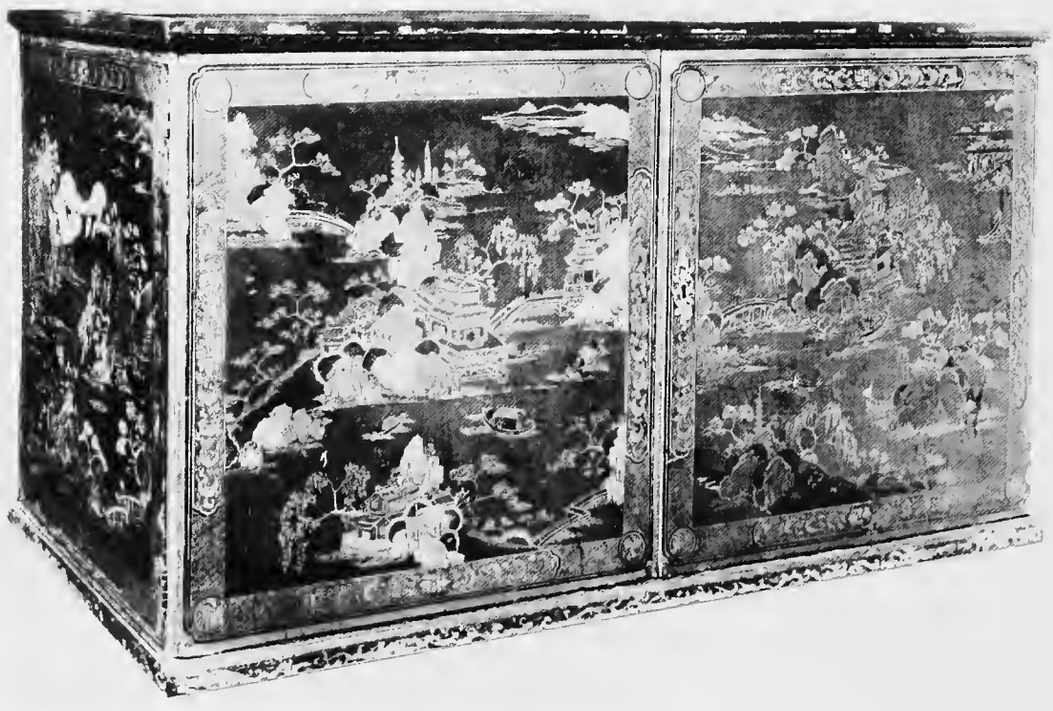
LACQUERED CHEST OF DRAWERS, ENGLISH, CIRCA 1710



RED LACQUER CABINET, ENGLISH, CIRCA 1760

DRESSING-MIRROR,
RED LACQUER

CABINET,
ORIENTAL LACQUER



When her son came of age (in 1721) the Countess of Warwick, who had married the poet Addison, moved from Holland House to a new building just completed in Old Burlington Street, nearly next door to the one which now contains the collection. At her death, two years later, an inventory was taken of her goods. The house seems to have been very completely furnished, excepting for the absence of carpets and for means of lighting the rooms. The windows were furnished with curtains and valances of mohair, camlet and crimson and yellow damask, and the coverings of the bed and chairs in the same apartments were to match. She also possessed numerous pieces of lac furniture, including two "six-leaved India japand screens," and three others covered with "India paper." The former were no doubt of incised lacquer imported from China, and the covering of the others was probably of Chinese, not India, paper. The inventory also refers to two India chests on gilt frames, one "India japand cabinet" and numerous "japand" dishes and boxes, as well as tables, chairs and stools, the latter articles being presumably decorated in England.

Lacquered Furniture

Another interesting catalogue is preserved in the British Museum, namely, of the household goods at N° 6 Albemarle Street, belonging to Sir William Stanhope, sold by auction in 1733. From the list of pictures by great masters and the description of numerous curios, the owner was evidently a great virtuoso, and, owing to successful South Sea speculations, he had ample means to gratify his tastes. The house was a comparatively modern one when he acquired the lease eight years previously from the Duchess of Hamilton, and as the sale (which lasted six days) included the entire contents of every room from basement to attic, one is able to gauge from the catalogue the appointments of an important town mansion of the period.

A feature of the sale was, "One cabinet of very rare brown Japan." Two other cabinets are described as "rare old Japan"; there were also five other "India Japan" cabinets on frames; five "India" screens (four of which appear to have been of incised lacquer), as well as numerous "Japan" tables, bookcases, dressing-glasses and trunks.

After the middle of the eighteenth century the fashion for English lac gradually abated, but for some time after was still considered a fashionable occupation; in 1754 Edwards & Darley published a book of designs illustrating their interpretation of Chinese ornament. On page 159 is illustrated a fine red lacquer cabinet made at about that date.

CHAPTER XIII. ENGLISH GESSO WORK

ONE of the many features of English decorative art which have been overlooked by the modern collector is furniture ornamented with gesso treatment. Originating in Italy, the method came to us through the Dutch, and numerous examples are to be found which were made in England for the palaces and great mansions during the reign of William and Mary. The process consisted of covering the wood with many successive thin coats of a composition made from whiting, glue, etc., allowing sufficient time for each coat to thoroughly harden, until a covering about one-eighth inch thick was formed, the design being then carved or, rather, scraped away and the surface gilt all over. The raised parts were burnished and the groundwork either "matted" or covered with small punched indentations. In cases where the design was in high relief, the wood was first approximately carved and completed when the composition had been applied. It is this process which has caused the frequent coupling together of the names of the trades of "carver and gilder."

The objects most often met with which are decorated by this treatment are mirrors. During the first quarter of the eighteenth century they were nearly all so ornamented. It was at this date that the value of mirrors as decorative objects was first fully realized. The collection at N° 31 Old Burlington Street contains numerous fine examples, of which the one shown on page 163, designed to fit in a long panel, will serve as an instance.

Next to mirrors, tables treated by this process are the articles most frequently found. At Kensington Palace can be seen the large side-tables bearing the arms of William and Mary, and on the top of page 165 is illustrated a small table treated by this method. On the same page another type of table is shown, and, although English in construction, the design of the ornament, as is frequently the case, shows the influence of the school of Boule. For some reason, which it is not easy to follow, much of this gesso work, and especially on tables, was at a later period of the eighteenth century painted over in black or brown, but fortunately such painting is often capable of being removed, when underneath is found the original gilding in as good a state of preservation as when first applied.

On page 163 is a reproduction of the celebrated torchère at Hampton Court Palace, the top of which on the same page bears the monogram and crown of George I. Copies of this model are not infrequent, but as the old process has not been understood, they are generally carved in wood, and

the effect

TOP OF GIRANDOLE (illustrated below) WITH ARMS OF GEORGE I WORKED IN GESSO

GIRANDOLE, CARVED IN WOOD WITH GESSO ENRICHMENT

MIRROR, CARVED WOOD WITH GESSO ENRICHMENT

PEDIMENTS OF MIRRORS WITH GESSO ENRICHMENT

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CHAIR IN CARVED WOOD WITH GESSO ENRICHMENT

TABLE WITH GESSO ENRICHMENT

WORK - TABLE ORNAMENTED WITH GESSO

TOP OF A TABLE SHOWING GESSO ORNAMENT

SMALL CABINET WITH
GESSO ENRICHMENT

the effect misses the whole character and feeling of the original style. Chairs treated by this process are extremely rare, as it is only the most elaborate models which would have repaid the expense of so decorating. The chair (page 164) represents the acme of refinement of this domestic article of furniture. In the splat and front rail panels are inserted, painted with classic subjects. Cabinets in gesso are even more scarce, and the example shown on page 166, which is one of a pair, is almost unique; it would be impossible to imagine a more decorative object for a fine apartment.

Instances occur, notably on table tops, where the centre part is veneered and a border several inches wide is treated in gesso, and sometimes walnut chairs are met with, on the legs or splats of which small panels of gesso work are inserted.

Considering the numerous models which still exist in England of furniture ornamented by this process, and considering how extremely decorative are objects so treated, it is difficult to realize why the craft of gesso work has remained so long neglected.

CHAPTER XIV
EARLY GEORGIAN CHIMNEY-PIECES

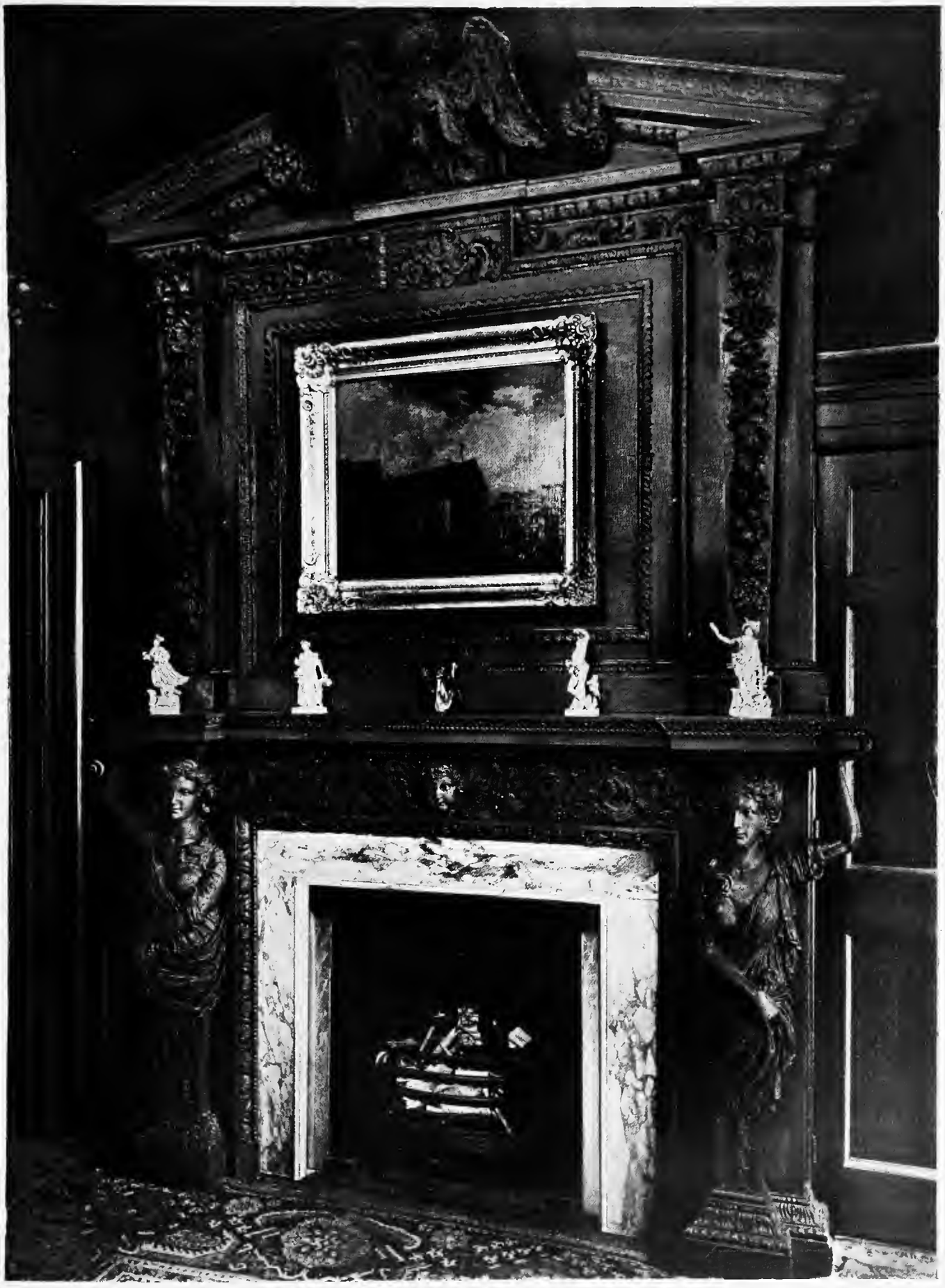
THE reason for devoting a special chapter to this subject is not because the chimney-pieces designed for great English houses during the reigns of George I and George II were more particularly distinctive to this country than those produced at other times; on the contrary, although foreign influences are apparent, the mantelpieces of the early Renaissance period vary largely from any to be met with on the Continent; and again, the joint efforts of Wren and Gibbons, at the end of the seventeenth century, do not possess their prototype in any other country. The object of this brief sketch is to draw attention to the principal features of decoration at a period (between about 1720 and 1750) which, generally speaking, is very little understood, and, until quite recently, has certainly not been fully appreciated.

Never before were so many great houses being simultaneously erected. Defoe, who had travelled in Italy and France, and who claimed to be well acquainted with the villas and châteaux in each of these countries, published, in 1738, *A Tour through the whole Island of Great Britain*. He found that numbers of the aristocracy were erecting new mansions in various parts of England. Referring to the west side of London, he states: "Let it suffice to tell you that there is an incredible Number of fine Houses built . . . within these few years, and that England never had such a glorious Show to make in the world before; in a Word, being curious in this part of my Enquiry, I find above two thousand Houses, which in other Places would pass for Palaces, and most, if not all, of the Possessors whereof keep Coaches."

It must be remembered that all this building took place at a period when English art (with the exception of painting) for the one and only time in history ranked higher than that of any Continental nation. Horace Walpole, than whom no one was more qualified to judge, referring to the reign of George II, states: "Researches had established the home of architecture in Britain, while it languishes in Rome, wantons in tawdry imitation of the French in other parts of Europe, and struggles in vain at Paris."

The origin of the whole scheme of design upon which these Georgian mantelpieces were planned is due to Inigo Jones, who, about one hundred years previously, after studying in Rome, introduced classic art into this country. In Italy he could have found no models of this particular object suitable for English homes, for the reason which Isaac Ware explains: "Those

who left



MANTELPIECE IN CARVED WOOD, TEMP. GEORGE II

MANTELPIECE IN CARVED WOOD, DESIGNED BY WILLIAM KENT

MANTELPIECE IN CARVED WOOD, TEMP. GEORGE I.

MANTELPIECE IN SECOND STATEROOM AT 31 OLD BURLINGTON STREET

UPPER PART OF MANTELPIECE IN CARVED WOOD, TEMP. GEORGE II.

MANTELPIECE IN WHITEHALL GARDENS, BY WILLIAM KENT

who left rules and examples for other articles lived in hotter climates, and the chimney-piece was not with them, as it is with us, a part of such essential importance."

Early Georgian Chimney-pieces

At Wilton and other houses where Inigo Jones is known to have worked there still remain mantelpieces of his design. Kent, Gibbs, Ware and other early Georgian architects took these examples as models, and included drawings of them, as well as copies of other sketches which Inigo Jones had left, in the books which they published, each admittedly regarding his designs of chimney-pieces as the standard of excellence.

Isaac Ware also points out: "No article in a well-furnished room is so important, the eye is immediately cast upon it entering, and the place of sitting down is essentially near it; by this means it becomes the most eminent thing in the furnishing of an apartment." A study of the plans and construction of early Georgian houses shows the trouble taken to arrange the chimney-breast exactly in the centre of one side of the room, otherwise the importance of the mantelpiece would accentuate any lack of uniformity.

It is not only the carved mantelpieces which are distinctive to this period, but also the elaborate ornamentation with which the other sides of the room were decorated; the intention of the architect being to treat the room in one complete scheme. The skill required to successfully carry out such treatment is still more apparent when the elaboration of the chimney-pieces of those times is considered, and the amount of ornamentation requisite on architraves, overdoors and panelling in order that the other walls should equal in importance the one on which the chimney-piece occupied the central position.

A separate article on Wood Panelling refers to the care and study bestowed, in the early eighteenth century, on that branch of decoration, and further explains how strictly accurate was every detail in accordance with the canons of the classic orders. It must, however, be realized that the ornaments on this panelling took their key-note from the design of the chimney-piece. In the books of the period the ceiling and the chimney-piece were the only parts which the early Georgian architects considered it necessary to illustrate, for when once the design of the latter was settled by their client, they had only to work out the design of the rest of the room in harmony.

The fashion of leaving the wood in its natural colour had ended, and the complete room was now painted; the cornice also was always painted to match the walls, and not whitened to correspond with the ceiling; the former

practice

practice is obviously correct, since the wall and cornice of a room, even to-day, is parallel in proportion to the members of a classic column. The cornice, therefore, is part of that column, and not part of the ceiling.

Work such as here described (of which the State Room at N° 31 Old Burlington Street is an excellent example) could never have been executed by ordinary craftsmen; far greater capability and knowledge was requisite than for the decoration of any other period. With the decadence, which commenced about the middle of the century, such ability would seem to have disappeared. In the place of carefully-designed rooms, where every detail had been studied, it became the fashion to merely hang the walls with silk and wall-paper, ornamentation being supplied by numerous mirrors and brackets, unnecessary when the treatment of the walls was itself complete decoration. The cost of the early Georgian method was certainly not greater when the cost of such applied ornaments is considered, and especially as the work could be carried out either in plaster or carved wood.

Respecting the plates accompanying this article, William Stanhope, who, under the Walpole administration occupied several great offices, including Secretary of State, and who was created Baron Harrington, Viscount Petersham and, eventually, Earl of Harrington, erected a new mansion on the site of a great house which the Lord Chancellor Clarendon had built at Petersham, and which was destroyed by fire in 1721. His friend, Lord Burlington, acted as his architect, no doubt assisted by William Kent. As a town residence, Lord Harrington occupied a house built on the site of the old gardens of the Palace of Whitehall (now part of the Offices of the Harbour Department of the Board of Trade), and employed William Kent for the decoration, at all events of the principal apartments. By kind permission the writer is enabled to illustrate two of the chimney-pieces in these rooms, which are shown on pages 170 and 175, both being essentially typical of his style, the former possessing special interest as being practically identical with a drawing which Vardy published as the work of "Mr" Kent.

The chimney-piece shown on page 171 was removed from an old house (since pulled down) in the City, probably built by a wealthy merchant in the reign of George I; the panelling and ornamentation of the doors and other parts of this room were proportionately as elaborate as the mantel; the classic figures and the broken pediment mark the school of Palladio, yet the carving of many of the mouldings seems to be the handicraft of men who had worked for Wren and Gibbons.

With regard

With regard to the remaining three illustrations, the one on page 173 is the chimney-piece in the State Room at N° 31 Old Burlington Street, an apartment which has been previously referred to. The example on page 174 is in the adjoining house, a mansion which Kent decorated for his patron, Sir Michael Newton, K.C.B.; and on page 169 is seen another chimney-piece, which has been reproduced from one which until recently existed in a house of the period in Old Bond Street.

Each of the chimney-pieces referred to in this article is of the type which Isaac Ware describes as "continued," that is, the construction terminating at or close under the ceiling, but this style was only suitable for rooms furnished with panelling or stucco, where, as previously explained, the chimney-piece, being executed in the same material and the same style as the remainder of the decoration, formed a unit of the complete scheme; but with the fashion of hanging the walls with paper, silk or damask, the "simple" mantel, that is, the top terminating at the shelf, became in vogue, the paper or silk being continued over the wall space above the mantel to match the other sides of the room. This alteration entirely changed the appearance of English apartments and ended the decorative treatment practised during the preceding age.

CHAPTER XV. THE LIGHTING OF ROOMS

THE use of candelabra, or what would now be termed candlesticks with branches, can be traced, from wills and other documents, to have existed in England as early as the fourteenth century, but such articles can hardly be ranked under the heading of furniture or decoration.

Hanging candelabra, now termed chandeliers, were first employed for the lighting of churches; Pope Hadrian (A.D. 772-795) is recorded as having presented one to St Peter's capable of holding 1,370 candles; the earliest Gothic cathedrals of northern Europe contained examples, and their use gradually extended to medieval castles and council chambers. These were formed of a large iron ring (suspended from a beam) on to which numerous sockets for holding lights were affixed; these candelabra were painted in bright colours, and sometimes further ornamented with gold and jewels.

The adoption of brass for iron seems the next development. In the picture at the National Gallery of a Flemish interior, by Jan van Eyck, painted in 1434, is seen a brass chandelier with eight branches, from which it may be assumed that such articles were by this time not uncommon for domestic purposes in the Netherlands.

D'Allemagne, again, in his work entitled *Histoire du Luminaire*, illustrates a fifteenth-century Gothic chandelier, having at the top a figure of the Virgin. The Temple Church at Bristol contains another example, which, in addition to the figure of the Virgin, is also ornamented with a small statuette of Saint George.

The above-mentioned examples were, no doubt, made in the neighbourhood of Dinant, where brass ware had been produced in large quantities since the fourteenth century; indeed, the products of that district were celebrated all over Europe under the name of *Dinanderie*, and many specimens found their way to England for use in cathedrals, if not in the castles.

Pictures of Dutch interiors show that brass chandeliers with branches and round balls on the stems were in general use in that country quite early in the seventeenth century; they had obviously developed from the Gothic form illustrated by Van Dyck. Few specimens are known to have existed in England previous to the Restoration of Charles II; but with that age of luxury they became plentiful, sometimes made with one, sometimes with two and sometimes with three tiers of branches. The one illustrated at the top of page 188 is a typical example. Irrespective of the question of size and the number of

branches

branches they varied little, and their use continued until nearly the middle of the eighteenth century. In the vestry at Sherborne Abbey there is an example of fairly large proportions, distinguished for the fact that the ball is finely engraved with coats-of-arms.

The next refinement of the chandelier in England was the substitution of silver for brass, such as the well-known example at Knole, a reproduction of which can be seen in the Wren Room on page 19.

At Murano, glass chandeliers were manufactured in the sixteenth century, but owing to the floral design and bright colourings always characteristic of Venetian taste they have never at any period been regarded as suitable for use in English homes; the earliest glass chandeliers which the writer can trace in this country are the beautiful specimens with cut-glass pendants at Penshurst, though it is doubtful whether these are of English make. On page 188 is illustrated a glass chandelier dating from the latter part of the seventeenth century, its design being inspired by the brass Dutch type previously referred to. From this shape the next example, a few years later in date, which now hangs in the State Room at N° 31 Old Burlington Street, shows a distinct divergence, and also marks the improvement which had taken place in the manufacture and cutting of glass. Glass chandeliers of this period are extremely rare, and this particular one possesses some additional interest as being almost identical, and evidently by the same maker, as the one in the Painted Room at Burleigh House. Another very similar one, though now much reduced in size from its original proportions, is at Groombridge Place, a house built by Sir Christopher Wren.

The palaces of Genoa and the cathedrals in Spain are said to have contained wooden chandeliers in the sixteenth century, but it was only in the reign of William III. that they commenced to be fashionable in this country, the elaborately carved one at Speke Hall probably dating from that time; at Brympton is another example, which formerly hung in Kensington Palace. On page 188 is shown another wooden one, but less elaborate and somewhat lighter in construction. By the date of the accession of George II requirements had somewhat changed; although huge sums were still lost and won by gambling, the fashion of card-playing of the preceding reigns (for which candles on the tables were all that was necessary) was to some extent being superseded by more intelligent evening receptions, and more general light was requisite. The eighteen hundred candles, all fixed into gilt branches, described in Mrs Delany's correspondence as being used in Westminster

Lighting of Rooms

Hall at the coronation banquet, illustrate the change which had taken place; and the means for obtaining increased light was one of the problems which William Kent had to work out for his aristocratic clients: in the large *salon* at N° 4 Grosvenor Square, a house attributed to Lord Burlington, are two very fine wooden chandeliers designed by him. The beautiful specimen seen on page 189 has been reproduced from an original model of about this period.

The previous descriptions have all related to what are now termed chandeliers, but the known use of these, at least in this country, does not date back as far as does the use of sconces as a means of illuminating apartments. Cavendish, Gentleman Usher to Cardinal Wolsey, in his account of the banquet given to the French Ambassadors at Hampton Court (1527), speaks of "Great candlesticks of silver and gilt most curiously wrought . . . and lights as big as torches burning upon the same, and the plates that hung on the walls to give light in the chamber were of silver and gilt, with lights burning in them."

In the very complete inventory of some ninety-five rooms at Hampton Court, taken after the death of Cromwell, it is curious how extremely few are the references to any means of lighting; possibly, being portable, they were amongst the articles which Mrs Cromwell had hidden over the fruiterer's shop, and which she afterwards had to return. The twelve branches for candles, twice referred to in the inventory, were probably of brass, and hooked on to sockets on the wall. In order to reflect the light, polished brass plates of various designs were fixed behind these branches, and under the name of sconces were in general use. To satisfy the luxury of the court of Charles II, silver was substituted for brass, and the plates were further ornamented with coats-of-arms and elaborate designs. On the top of page 187 are shown examples of such sconces in the collection at Old Burlington Street, and no object could be more decorative on the oak or cedar panelling of this period. Looking-glass was now being manufactured in this country, and one of the earliest uses to which it was devoted was as back plates for sconces, other specimens of which are also shown on the same page.

Another article which contributed to the illumination of rooms was the torchère or stand, upon which stood the candelabra or candlestick with many branches; these candle stands were sometimes enriched by coating in silver during the reign of Charles II. In the preceding article on gesso work, a torchère made for King George I has been referred to. In various styles,

changing

changing according to the fashions of the day, these stands continued to be manufactured till the close of the eighteenth century. Lighting of Rooms

The wooden chandeliers, although massive in appearance, contained but few branches, and had to be supplemented with candles on the walls. It is difficult to imagine anything more suitable or decorative in a fine apartment than the large sconces illustrated on pages 190 and 191, or the smaller variety also on the former page, the designs of the other two being evidently the work of William Kent. Another scheme which he adopted to serve the same purpose was the employment of the classic truss, as a bracket supporting a vase-shaped lamp fitted with candle-holders. (See page 189.)

In entrance halls the candles were liable to be blown out, and "lanthorns" of various types had been in use in such apartments for upwards of a century; the decoration of these classic halls was one of the features in the mansions of this period, and lanterns had to be designed to suit the important surroundings. It will be admitted that the one given on page 189 fulfils this object.

Although Chippendale in his book gives designs for ten different chandeliers, it is doubtful whether many of these were ever actually produced; the drawings were probably intended to compete with those in Grecian taste which the fashionable Robert Adam was then designing for his clients. The smaller chandelier shown on page 189 is an original specimen, which, though showing French influence, is the work of the English furniture maker of about the middle of the eighteenth century. As will be seen in the paintings of Hogarth, every available space was used as a receptacle for a candle; even on the bottom corners of picture frames and mirrors are frequently found little sockets into which candle branches were fitted. The furniture designers of the school of Chippendale continued this practice, but the branches became more ornamental, and instead of fitting into sockets sprang from the representations of foliage or rock-work which ornamented their mirrors and girandoles. The plan could not have been entirely satisfactory, as the branches were so light in construction and so insecurely fixed that the candles could not have remained long perpendicular. The brothers Adam treated the subject more seriously, and a considerable number of their drawings illustrate what they term Grecian and Etruscan tripods, vases, girandoles and wall brackets, all designed, not only for the purpose of holding candles, but to occupy prominent positions in rooms ornamented in the same style. Sheraton followed on the same lines, and aimed at even greater "elegance" by still further reducing the proportions of such articles

Lighting of Rooms

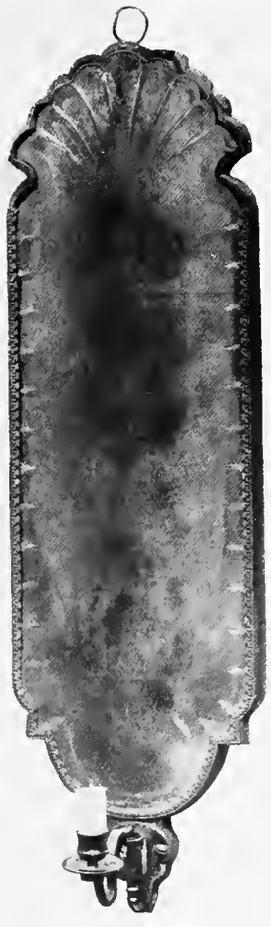
of furniture: referring to his tripod candlesticks, he explains that, "The style of finishing these for noblemen's drawing rooms is exceeding rich; . . . persons unacquainted with the manufactureing part of these stands may apprehend them to be slight and easily broken; but this objection vanishes when it is considered the scrolls are made of strong wire and the ornaments cemented to them."

In addition to these elegant pieces of furniture, large numbers of glass chandeliers, generally ornamented with a profusion of drops hung in festoons, were both made in this country and imported here from France during the latter half of the century; the designs in either cases being very similar.

However graceful these chandeliers may be considered, certainly they are inadmissible in any English room unless it is decorated in the style of Robert Adam or his successors. This fact is mentioned since, in order to supply modern requirements for increased light, they are often fitted in rooms of earlier date; indeed it may be taken as an axiom for successful decoration that objects showing any influence of the ultra-classic or so-called Grecian taste prevalent in France during the latter part of the reign of Louis XV, and during the whole of that of his successor and in England under George III, can never harmonize with any early Georgian work and still less with the style of any previous period.

GLASS CHANDELIER IN FIRST STATE ROOM, CIRCA 1720

THREE TYPES OF SILVER SCONCES

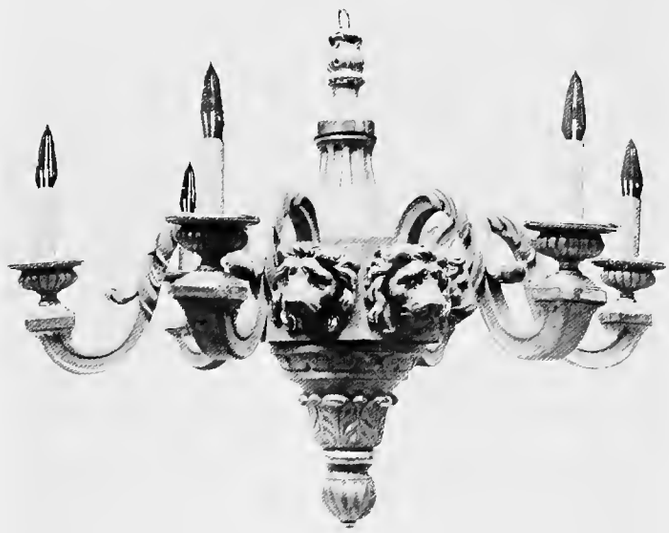


SCONCES WITH VAUXHALL PLATES

SCONCE, CIRCA 1720

BRASS CHANDELIER, CIRCA 1660

GLASS CHANDELIER, CIRCA 1680



CHANDELIER IN CARVED WOOD GILT, CIRCA 1710

CHANDELIER IN CARVED WOOD GILT,
CIRCA 1730

CHANDELIER IN CARVED WOOD GILT,
STYLE OF CHIPPENDALE

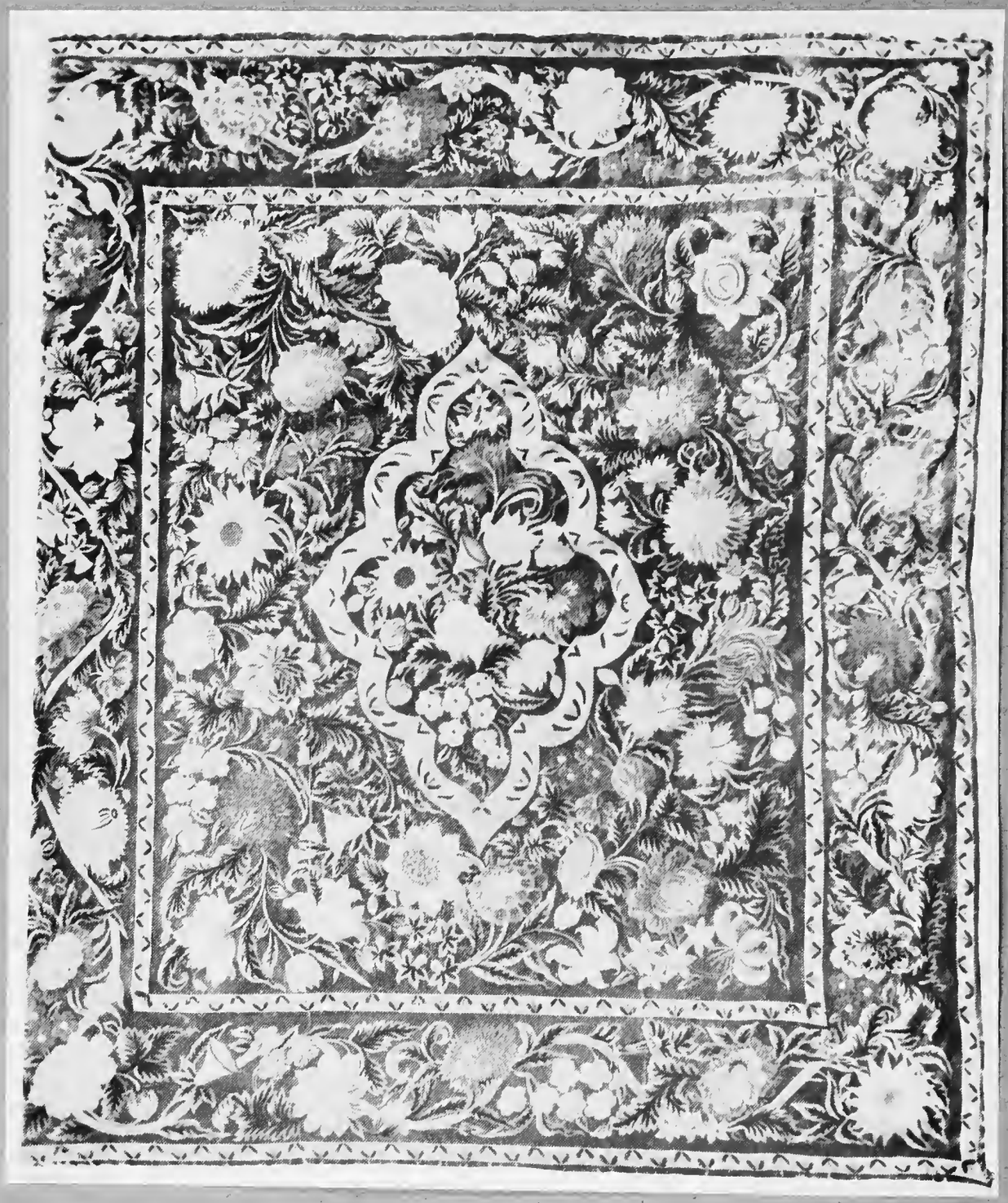
HALL LANTERN, PERIOD OF WILLIAM KENT

BRACKET SUPPORTING TORCHERE, BY WILLIAM KENT

SCONCE IN CARVED WOOD GILT, CIRCA 1740

SCONCE IN CARVED WOOD GILT, DESIGNED BY WILLIAM KENT

SCONCE IN CARVED WOOD, GILT, WITH FIVE LIGHTS,
DESIGNED BY WILLIAM KENT



ENGLISH NEEDLEWORK CARPET, CIRCA 1700

CHAPTER XVI. CARPETS

IT was not until the middle of the eighteenth century that the word Carpet acquired its present exclusive meaning; previously it also denoted a covering for a table or bed; for instance, in 1596, Richard Bellasio, of Morton, in the County of Durham, bequeaths to his nephew: "His best Turkey carpet for the long table." In the *Verney Papers* Lady Sussex, whilst considering the purchase of a small carpet, remarks: "If it will not sarve for a windo it will sarve for a fote carpet," and another one she thinks "Wolde bee very fine for a Bede." The inventory of Cromwell's goods relates how, in the rich bedchamber, amongst the various furniture, was "one French carpett of the same velvett and imbroidered suitable to the state bed"; the same room also containing "one large Persian Carpett under the bed." In Bailey's *Dictionarium Britannicum*, as late as 1766, a carpet is described as "a covering for a table, passageway or floor." Indeed, it would appear that it was as covers for tables that the earliest Oriental carpets imported to this country were employed: their use for such purpose may be seen in paintings and illuminated manuscripts.

Cardinal Wolsey was the first in England to imitate the luxury of the Renaissance of Florence, Rome and Venice for the interiors of his palaces; the method he adopted for obtaining carpets is interesting. At an interview with the Venetian Ambassador he mentions various articles which he required, "but above all the carpets." The Ambassador stated in a special report on England which he made to the Doge and Senate that "Cardinal Wolsey is very anxious for the Signore to send him one hundred Damascene carpets for which he has asked several times and expected to receive them by the last galleys. . . . should the Signore itself not choose to incur the expense the slightest hint to the London factory would induce that body to take it on themselves." The Venetian merchants were anxious to obtain the repeal of certain duties on goods they imported to England; and, as the Ambassador adds, "To discuss the matter further until the Cardinal receives his one hundred carpets would be idle." It is hardly necessary to say that the carpets were sent.

In the time of the great Cardinal carpets had by no means superseded rushes as coverings for floors. One of the charges brought by the King against his former minister was his extravagance in the use of sweet rushes (a variety obtained principally in Norfolk). Queen Mary only employed rushes, but Queen Elizabeth, in her presence chamber, had a rug spread over them. During her reign considerable numbers of Oriental carpets were sent to

England and their use gradually extended, until, by the middle of the eighteenth century they were to be found in one or more of the principal apartments of every mansion.

Originally these carpets had been imported from Persia through Venice; with the discovery of the sea route, the Portuguese brought Indian varieties, which came to us through Antwerp, then the mart of the world. Queen Elizabeth granted a charter to an English East India Company at the end of her reign, but this enterprise was quite outshadowed during the first half of the seventeenth century by the trading companies formed by the young Dutch Republic; indeed, the latter seem to have taken from their rivals the whole of the trade of the Orient, and during that period our carpets, as well as other articles of luxury, were almost exclusively obtained through Amsterdam.

In the year of the accession of Charles II our own East India Company, though still existing, was in "an unfavourable state," whilst the Dutch Company that year paid a dividend of forty per cent to the proprietors of their stock. However, from that time the positions gradually reversed, and at the beginning of the eighteenth century it may be assumed that Eastern carpets were entirely supplied through our own merchants.

Curious examples remain of Oriental carpets made to order, into which coats-of-arms have been woven; notably, the Indian one presented in 1634 to the Girdlers' Company by Robert Bell, a prominent East Indian merchant, and the specimen at Knole, some twenty years later in date, bearing the Curzon arms. In the very complete inventory of the goods of Cromwell, which were contained in some ninety rooms at Hampton Court, a number of references to carpets is made. Out of twenty-two from Turkey there was only one large square one, the others being strips averaging about nine or ten feet long. There were also seven Persian carpets, some of which appear to have been very large, similar to those recorded about the same date as existing (and which still remain) at the neighbouring Ham House, as well as those at Penshurst. Amongst his possessions were also two needlework carpets and three leather ones, the latter doubtless being coverings for inlaid floors.

It does not appear that any carpets had been woven in England up to this period, but constant references are made to those produced by hand, generally termed "Turkey work," and similar to the material often then employed for covering chairs. Specimens of this work still exist, made as early as the reign of Queen Elizabeth, into which coats-of-arms, dates and ciphers have been introduced. During the reigns of William and Mary and Anne ladies

occupied

occupied much of their time in working covers for seats and settees, and so great was their industry, and the amount of their spare time, that they were also able to produce large carpets. The illustration on page 199 does not do justice to the rare Queen Anne needlework carpet which it represents; this carpet is used in the "Painted Room" shown on page 133. Another exceptionally fine needlework carpet of the same period, and which is also in the collection at N° 31 Old Burlington Street, is shown on page 194. Carpets

The Moors and Saracens in Spain are known to have produced carpets in that country from early ages; indeed, Eleanor of Castile is said to have brought to England splendid pieces turned out from the looms of Cordova and Granada. Even to-day, to a small extent, the industry is still carried on there. Fine examples of Spanish carpets are occasionally met with, and some may have found their way here during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, either as Royal presents or sent by our Ambassadors.

Woven carpets of fine quality are said to have been made in Holland during the seventeenth century, chiefly at Deventer; in which town, until quite recently, the trade still continued.

It is related that the Savonnerie carpet works were started by Persian operatives specially brought to France by Henry IV. Considering how little intercourse there was then between France and the East, it would seem more probable that its original inception was due to weavers from the Netherlands. The production of these carpets was regarded with great pride by successive French monarchs, and everything possible was done to keep their manufacture secret; but, after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, numerous families of French weavers emigrating to England taught us the trade.

Between 1755 and 1765 Boucher was responsible both for the designs of the tapestry of the Gobelins and of the carpets produced at the Savonnerie. His theory that weaving should imitate painting was certainly unfortunate, so far as it applied to the coverings for floors. Emigration continued under the cruel treatment from which the peasants in France suffered during this period; it was only from England that serious rivalry was feared, and an edict was issued by Marigney to intercept all letters addressed to the servants of the Crown employed at either factory which came from England. Notwithstanding this and other precautions, considerable numbers of the oppressed workmen, including some of the most capable, succeeded in escaping.

A charter was granted by William III, in 1701, to Wilton to manufacture carpets in the same method as in France, the industry being carried on there

there by French emigrants; this charter was confirmed or renewed in 1706 and again in 1725. It has been related (though with what authority the writer cannot discover) that two Frenchmen, Dufossy and Jemaule, were smuggled to England in barrels to assist in its superintendence.

It must not be thought that carpets at the middle of the eighteenth century were universal, even in the greatest houses, to the same extent that we are now accustomed. This is proved from the paintings of Hogarth, always reliable in matters of detail. Even in the dressing and bedrooms of the Earl and Countess in the "Marriage à la Mode" series of pictures, none are shown; whereas, in the apartment newly decorated for the young married couple, in the "Shortly after Marriage" scene, one is illustrated. Another is seen in his later picture, "The Lady's Last Stake."

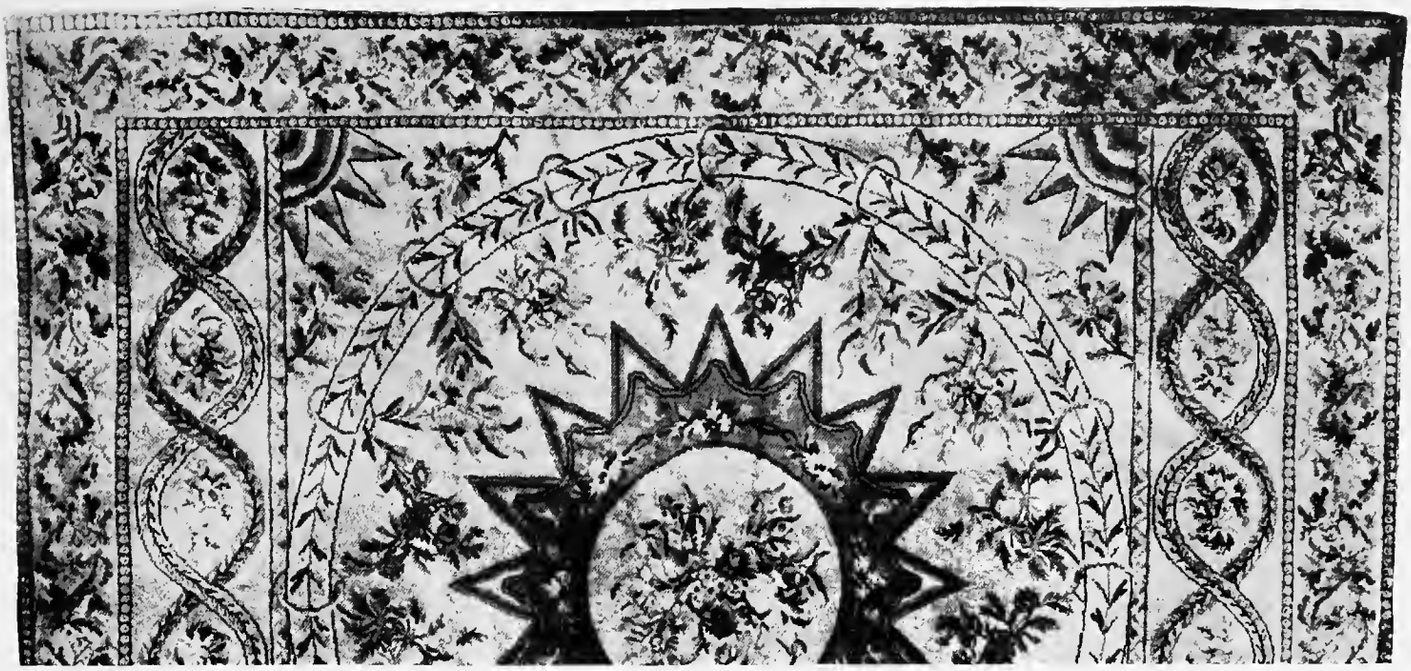
It was not until the beginning of the last century that stair carpets became universal in English mansions.

The revival of pure classic architecture at the beginning of the reign of George II is largely due to Henry Herbert, Earl of Pembroke; to his friend Richard, Earl of Burlington; and to William Kent. It was the former nobleman of whom Walpole states: "No man had a purer taste. . . . It was more than taste, it was a passion for the utility and honour of his country," who did so much to encourage the manufacture of the better kinds of carpets. Lord Pembroke interested himself deeply in the manufactory at Wilton which his father, Earl Thomas, had encouraged.

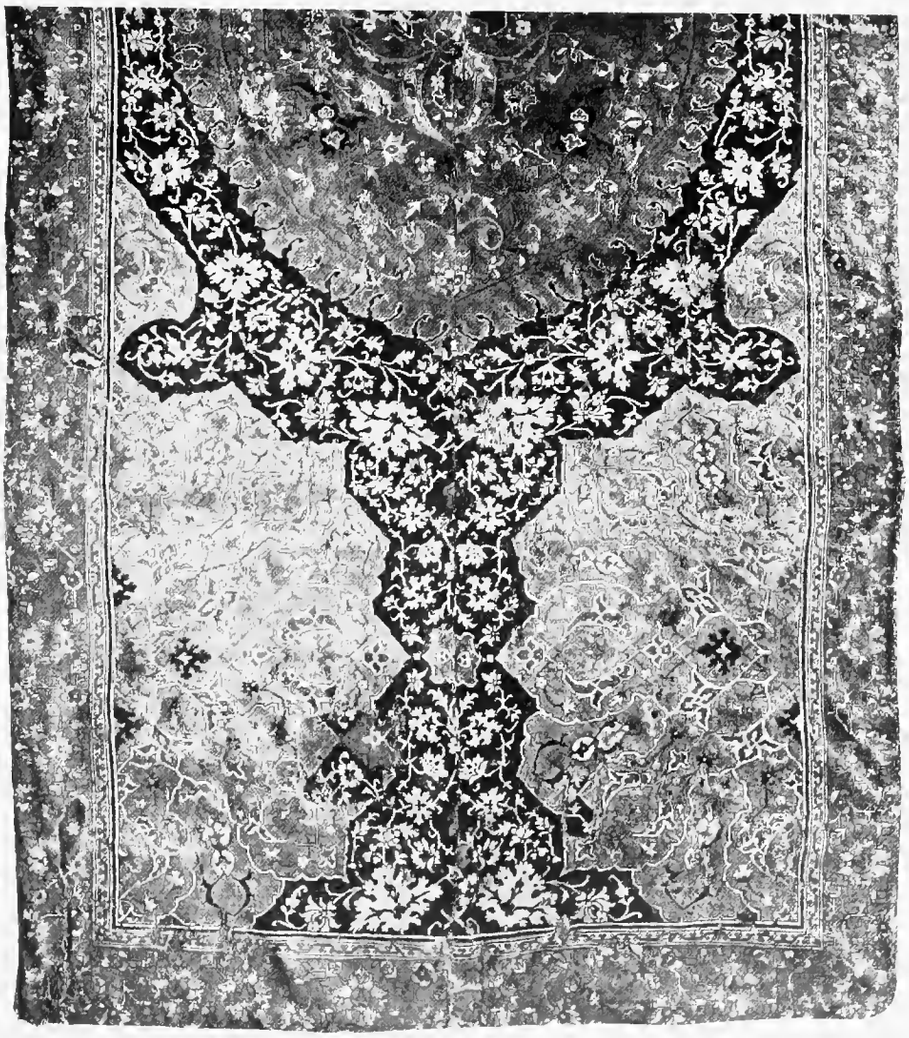
It will be easily realized that the patrons of the school of Palladio of this period required carpets of classic, not Oriental, patterns to suitably complete the decoration of their gorgeous apartments, and it was this class of design (somewhat resembling the style made at the Savonnerie under Louis XIV such as is illustrated on page 200) which was then produced in this country.

Once firmly established, the English carpet trade did not suffer from lack of encouragement. At the latter part of the same reign Peter Parisot started a new manufactory at Fulham, and the Duke of Cumberland purchased the first carpet and presented it to the Princess Dowager of Wales. A branch factory was also founded at Paddington, and, in 1750, the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce awarded a premium to Mr Moore for the best imitations of Turkey carpets which had been made there. Bishop Pococke, in his diary (1751), referring to Kidderminster, relates: "That place is famous for carpets made without nap, like the Scotch, but now they make the same as at Wilton, and it is said they are attempting

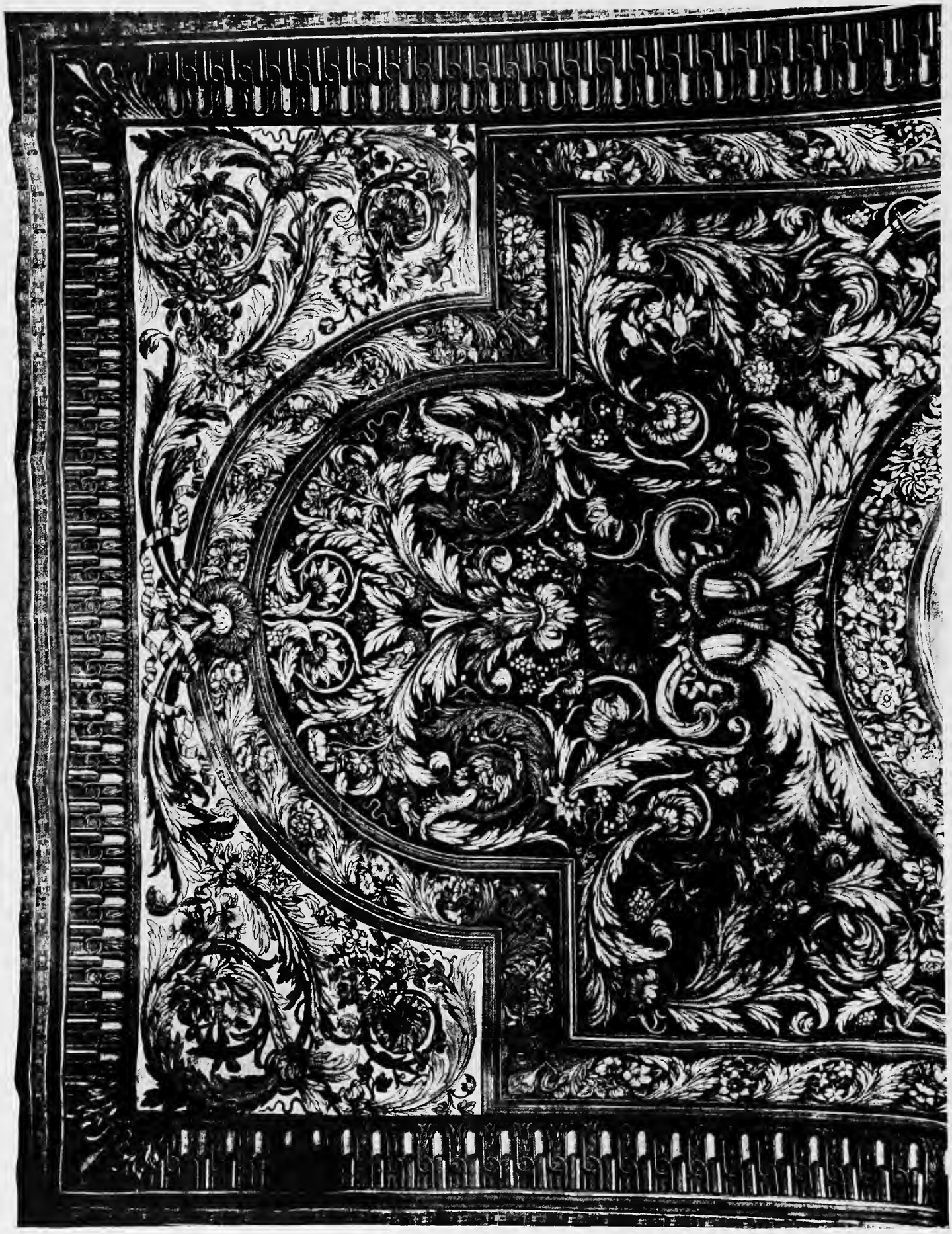
to weave



PORTION OF ENGLISH NEEDLEWORK CARPET, TEMP. QUEEN ANNE

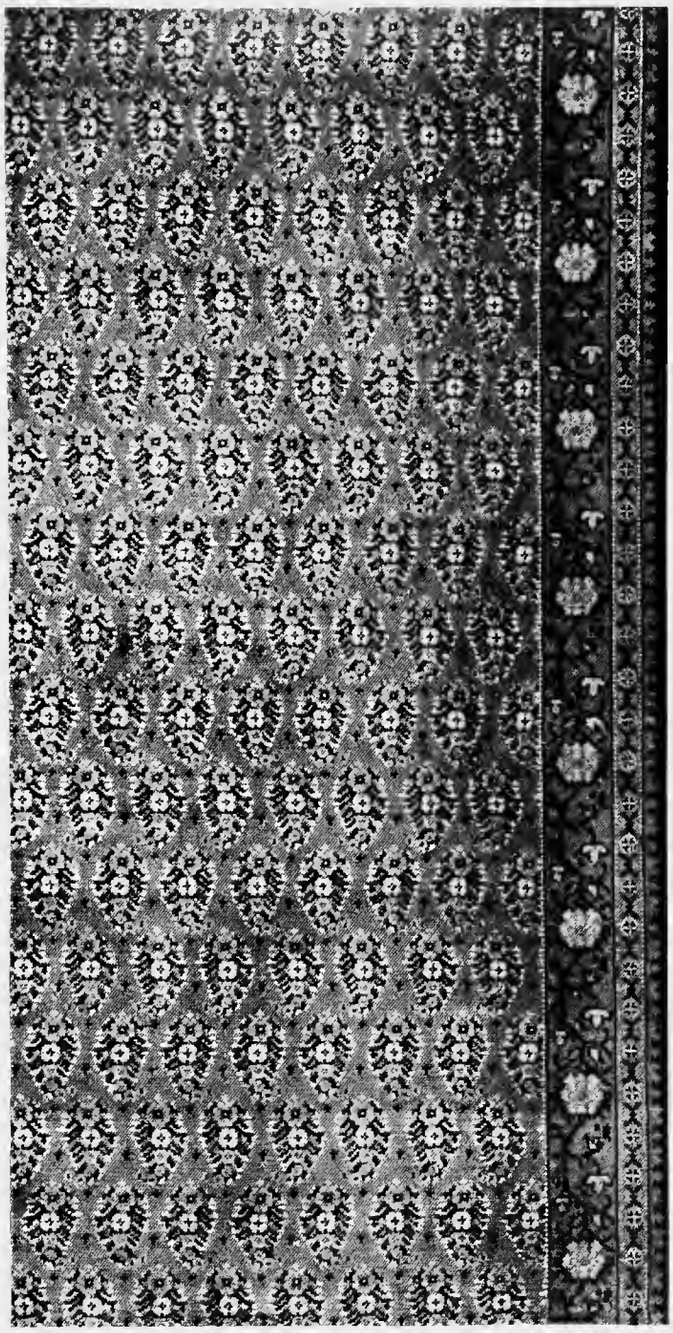


PORTION OF SEVENTEENTH CENTURY TURKISH CARPET



PORTION OF A SAVONNERIE CARPET, PERIOD OF LOUIS XIV

201 TURKEY CARPET, EIGHTEENTH CENTURY



ENGLISH CARPET, PINE PATTERN

PORTION OF SPANISH CARPET EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

to weave 'em in one piece." A Mr Whitty had established works at Axminster in 1755, and four years later "the proper judges" of the above-named Society examined six carpets made by him and two others made by Mr Jesser, of Frome, and "gave it as their opinion that all the carpets produced were made in the manner of Turkey carpets, but much superior to them in beauty and goodness." This extract is interesting, as showing that it was the quality of the Turkey carpets they were imitating, and not the design.

Carpet factories were also started at Holyrood in Scotland, and afterwards at Glasgow and Kilmarnock. Lady Mary Coke relates in her journal (1768) that she had visited the carpet manufactory in Moorfields, where "we saw one that was making for Lord Coventry that he had agreed to give one hundred and forty guineas for; it is indeed excessively fine." This was probably for Croome Court, built in 1760 by "capability" Browne, and then being decorated by Robert Adam.

Magnificent examples of English carpets made about this period still exist, those at Holkham, although dating from some few years after his death, being probably from the designs of William Kent. At Saltram is another, designed by Robert Adam, possibly also made at Moorfields.

To-day carpets can be manufactured in England equal in quality to those made in the middle of the eighteenth century. The difficulty, however, is to obtain classic designs equal in composition and colouring to those then employed, but from a study of the examples that still remain, and from a knowledge of the art of that period, it is one that might be overcome.

If the theory of the early Georgian school, that carpets designed with classic *motif* are better for decorative treatment than those of Eastern pattern and colouring, was correct then, it is much more so to-day. At that period Oriental carpets were very different from those now obtainable. Probably no trade has ever deteriorated more quickly than has the manufacture of carpets in the East during the past twenty years. Generally this is attributed to the aniline dyes and the discordant colours obtained by their use, but the real reason would seem to be that European business houses now dictate the designs and colours, to suit what they consider to be the taste of their customers. When Eastern carpets are imported showing traces of the characteristic vagaries of "L'Art Nouveau," it will be admitted that the old theories —as to the distinctive merit of Oriental design, and as to their suitability for the decoration of any room, in whatever style it may be furnished—may be regarded as at an end.

On pages

Carpets

On pages 199 and 201 are represented specimens of Turkey carpets such as our ancestors were able to obtain. Uncoloured illustrations of carpets can portray but little; it is, however, perhaps unnecessary to say that the colours and quality of these are very different from any which are now procurable.

On page 202 is shown a reproduction of the old Persian "pine" pattern, so often copied by the eighteenth century English manufacturers; certainly it is more artistic (if less "smart") than the plain red style recently fashionable, and on the same page is illustrated another reproduction of an old Spanish carpet, the original of which is also in the Lenygon collection.

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Stalker, J. A Treatise of Japanning and Varnishing 1688
Tijou, J. A New Booke of Drawings (of Ironwork) 1693
K., C. Art's Masterpiece; or, a Companion for the Ingenious of either Sex 1697
Salmon, W. (M.P.). Polygraphica; or, the Arts of Drawing (Fourth Edition) 1701
Brunetti, G. Sixty Different Sorts of Ornament (First Edition) 1731
Gibbs, J. Thirty-three Shields & Compartments for Monumental Inscriptions 1731
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Carwitham, J. Various Kinds of Floor Decoration 1739
Copeland, H. A New Book of Ornaments 1746
Lock, M. Six Tables 1746
Lock and Copeland. New Book of Ornaments 1752
Rosis, A. New Book of Ornaments 1753
Edwards and Darly. Chinese Designs 1754
Chippendale, T. Gentleman & Cabinet Maker's Director (First Edition) 1754
Dictionarium Polygraphicum; or, the Whole Body of Arts 1758
Johnson, T. Designs for Picture Frames, etc. 1758
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Swan. Designs in Carpentry 1759
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Ince and Mayhew. Univ. System of Household Furniture circa 1762

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Manwaring, R. The Carpenter's Complete Guide to the Whole System of Gothic Railing 1765
Manwaring, R. The Cabinet & Chair Maker's Real Friend & Companion 1765
Manwaring, R. Upwards of 100 New and Genteel Designs Undated
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Milton, Crunden, Columbani and Overton. Chimney Piece Maker's Daily Assistant 1766
Manwaring, R. The Chair Maker's Guide 1766
Darly, M. Sixty Vases by English, French and Italian Masters 1767
Lock and Copeland. New Book of Ornaments 1768
Lock, M. A Book of Tables, Candle Stands, etc. 1768
Lock, M. Six Sconces 1768
Lock, M. Pier Frames, Ovals, etc. 1769
Lock, M. A New Book of Foliage 1769
Wallis, N. A Book of Ornaments 1771
Wallis, N. Complete Modern Joiner 1772
Wallis, N. The Carpenter's Treasure Undated
Adam, R. and J. Works in Architecture. (Published in parts 1812) 1773
Pastorini, B. New Book of Designs for Girandoles 1775
Columbani, P. New Book of Ornaments 1775
Columbani, P. A Variety of Capitals, Freezes and Corniches 1776
Richardson, G. A Book of Ceilings 1776
Pergolesi, M. A. Designs 1777
Pain, W. Carpenter and Joiner's Repository 1778
Chippendale, T. (Junr). Sketches of Ornament 1779
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Richardson, G. A New Collection of Chimney Pieces 1781
Cipriani, J. B. Book of Ornament (figure work only) 1786
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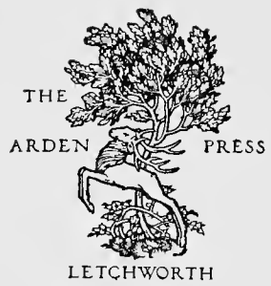
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